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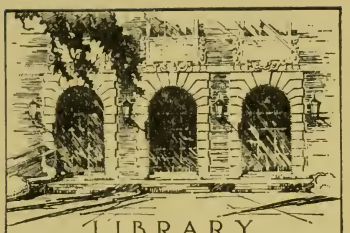

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WAYNFLETE.

BY

CHRISTABEL R. COLERIDGE,

AUTHOR OF

'AMETHYST," "JACK-O'-LANTHORN," "AN ENGLISH SQUIRE," ETC.

"To each man is appointed his particular dread; the terror that if he does not fight against it, will cow him even to the loss of his manhood."—RUDYARD KIPLING.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PART II.

THE DOUBLE.

(Continued.)

WAYNFLETE.

CHAPTER VII.

WAITING FOR GUY.

Mrs. Waynflete never told any one that she had sent for Guy. She did not know that he could not get a conveyance at Kirk Hinton, nor that her letter had been late for the post; and when he did not come by the first train in the morning, she grew angry and bitterly hurt with him, and still listened when he was long over-due. If she had never heard the galloping horseman before, she heard him then, the monotonous disappointing sound that began and grew near, and nearer, and never

stopped; but, when it was nearest, went by and began again.

She wandered up into her bedroom, and looked to see if the two wills were safe. Jeanie, who did many little offices, hardly enough appreciated, ran in with some flowers for her table.

"Oh, aunt, I didn't know you were there."

"Look here, Sarah Jane. You can do as you're bid without asking questions. Look in this drawer. D'ye see this blue envelope, in the right-hand corner?"

"Yes, aunt."

"Now, here's the key in the pocket of my gown, and if I give you the word, you go and take it out, and unlock this drawer, and take that blue envelope, and drop it in the fire. Do you understand?"

"Yes, aunt; but——"

"Which envelope are you to take?"

"The blue one, aunt——"

"It's well to be on the safe side—and I

might be prevented—I might be prevented! So, if Guy comes——"

"Guy, aunt? Do you expect Guy?"

"I wrote to him, desiring him to come. But there! he's taken no heed of my words. And the train's in by this time."

"There's another one, aunt, comes in at four, but——"

Mrs. Waynflete turned the key in the drawer, put it in her pocket, and moved restlessly over to the window, to look out once more. The wind swirled round the old house, and cried mournfully in its eaves and chimneys, and mingling with it, the odd, unceasing noise of the galloping horse startled her with the fresh possibility that this time it was really Guy coming. She went hurriedly along the passage into the octagon room, and looked out through the broken iron gates across the new buildings in the stable-yard, through the scanty avenue of wind-blown elm trees, to the bridge across the Flete. There was no one coming, and all

the distance was dim with mist and fog. The future was also dim and indistinct. What would the future be for this old house, which had so strange a past? Who would come after her? Who ought to come?

"Guy is sure to be too late," she muttered, though she did not know for what he needed to be in time, and then with a sudden thought she turned to look at the picture over the chimney, the face, on which in that many-windowed room the light always seemed to direct itself. "Eh!" she thought to herself, "It's a comfortless countenance!" And having looked, she turned quickly, thinking she heard an arrival at last, and either her foot caught in the hearthrug, or a sudden dizziness seized her, she fell at full length on the slippery floor, her head striking against the boards, and the noise of the fall echoed through the house, and brought Jeanie and her mother both, running to see what had chanced.

When Mrs. Palmer found that the old lady

was apparently stunned, certainly unconscious, she was afraid to run the risk of having her carried to the other side of the house, but caused a little iron bedstead to be brought in from one of the servants' rooms, and, with some difficulty, the tall, bony figure was lifted upon it. She had to send to Rilston for the doctor, where Godfrey was, no one exactly knew, but she ordered a telegram to be sent to Guy at Ingleby, hardly knowing if it would give him time to come that day.

Then ensued an afternoon of distress and perplexity. The doctor fortunately was encountered on the road, and came within an hour; but his verdict was bad. The head had been injured by the fall, and besides, it seemed to him, that the vital powers, the activity of the heart, more weakened by age than had been supposed, had failed in the shock, and revival was most improbable. He feared it was a question of hours.

Mrs. Palmer did her best. She was a soft,

comfortable woman, not used to emergencies, and perhaps happily, the weird surroundings did not impress her slow imagination. She never thought of the picture that looked down at his descendant with his hopeless eyes, of the curious fate that brought this second waiting for those who did not come into the fatal chamber, and she only thought of the ghastly horseman, when the puzzling noise made her start up expecting to see one of the young men arriving. Most of the servants were strangers, and the one old housemaid, who was accustomed to wait on her mistress, was in tears and despair, afraid that "missus," when she came round, would be displeased with everything that was done for her.

Jeanie, in frightened whispers, confided to her mother what her aunt had told her about the blue envelope.

"Burn a paper!" said Mrs. Palmer. "Whatever she may say, Jeanie, don't you think of doing such a thing. Who knows if she has

her faculties? Don't take such a responsibility on you for worlds. Godfrey must be back in an hour or so; I believe he was only going to lunch at the Rabys. See if you can send after him."

So the fire was lighted in the octagon room, and all the incongruous necessaries of sudden illness appeared among the old furniture, and contrasted with the unused solitude of the place.

Mrs. Waynflete lay on her bed. She had moved and opened her eyes, but she did not speak, and whether she was conscious of waiting either for death, or for the coming of her nephews—who could say?

The women about her waited for a "change," or for some one to come to them out of the gathering twilight, and the doctor stayed and watched the case. The wind drove and cried, and the unresting horseman galloped round and round the house. Even the young vicar happened to be out for the day. Mrs. Wayn-

flete had trenchantly informed him that "she hadn't often much necessity to call on other folks to help her." But Mrs. Palmer and Jeanie would have been very glad to welcome him now. Lights were brought, and the octagon windows shone out into the surrounding gloom.

The two women did not think much about Guy; but they grieved much over the continued absence of Godfrey.

Suddenly Mrs. Waynflete looked up, with eyes into which a clearer light had come—

"I'm dying," she said abruptly, with some strength still in her deep old voice. "I'm dying, and they're neither of them here. The Lord forgive me all my sins."

"Oh, dear aunt, I'm sure you're a little better; the dear boys are just coming!"

Mrs. Waynflete folded her hands together, and looked straight out before her.

"It might have occurred to you, Susan Joshua, to put up a prayer."

"I didn't know if you'd like it aloud, Aunt

Waynflete. I'm sure I have been praying for you—to myself."

"Pray for them; it's more to the purpose."

Then poor Susan Joshua knelt down by the bed and put on her spectacles, and while Jeanie found a Prayer-book, and kneeling beside her held the light, read straight through the absolution and all the prayers for the visitation of the sick, and, if she did not apply the words to any but the passing soul before her, there was many a petition that suited well with the needs of the two, who "whether by the fraud and malice of the devil, or by their own carnal will and frailty," were so sore bested.

And in the midst, a sound of creaking wheels, a loud tone of inquiry and speeding footsteps, and Godfrey rushed in, pale and horrified, and fell on his knees beside her, clasping her hand.

"Oh, Auntie—Auntie Waynflete!" he cried, almost sobbing. "Oh, Auntie! why wasn't I here? Auntie, speak to me!"

Mrs. Waynflete's fingers feebly answered to his agitated clasp. She looked hard at him, and she smiled a little, then she said faintly but imperiously—

"Go on with the prayer."

Mrs. Palmer read on; and the old woman's breath came fainter and fainter still, and her hands grew feebler, till as almost the last words came, "Deliver her from fear of the enemy, and lift up the light of Thy countenance upon her, and give her peace," Jeanie sprang up from her knees with a scream, and let the candle she held fall over and go out upon the floor.

There, within the door, stood Guy, white and wild, with eyes that seemed the very home of fear.

He came unsteadily forward, and, as Godfrey started up, sank on his knees by the bedside.

Mrs. Waynflete opened her eyes wide, and looked hard at him, struggling to speak.

"Aunt Margaret," he said, steadily and clearly, "I am *not* too late; I can't satisfy your mind about the business, but you may be satisfied with me. I have got past, and I have come. You can die in peace."

It hardly seemed as if it was Guy who spoke, but old Margaret understood. She looked at him and smiled, a strange sweet smile, such as had never been seen on her lips before, and before memory could remind her of what she had done or left undone, her head fell back, and, with hardly a struggle, she was gone.

Guy stood up for a moment, looked vaguely round him, then fell forward across the foot of the bed, as unconscious and as death-like as she.

CHAPTER VIII.

"UNADVISEDLY WITH HIS LIPS."

When old John Cooper arrived at Ingleby Mill on the next morning, an orange-coloured envelope lay on the top of the heap of letters awaiting him.

He opened it deliberately, and read—

"*From Godfrey Waynflete. Mrs. Waynflete died suddenly last night.*"

The old man sat staring at the brief words, as their sense gradually bore itself in upon him, first their meaning, and then their grievousness, the blank space in life left by the fall of that vigorous tree. He was still sitting, dazed and stunned, when there was a hasty step, and Cuthbert Staunton, with another telegram in his hand, came in.

"Ah, you have heard?" he said. "I am going to Waynflete. Have you any particulars? No? Mine is only the same news, and also that Mr. Guy is ill, and wants me."

"Oh Lord, sir," said old Cooper, with a sob, "it's as if the mill was dead and gone too!"

Ill news spreads quick. The old man's son and the younger Howarth, middle-aged men themselves, were soon in the room, listening with impassive faces but with heavy hearts to the evil tidings.

"It's very bad news," said Howarth, huskily —"very bad indeed."

"I must catch the early train," said Cuthbert, "and I will take care that you have further news as soon as possible."

"I must go to Jos Howarth," said old Cooper, getting up. "I'll hear what he has to say first."

He went away to find his old fellow-worker, and the younger men looked at each other.

"It's very difficult," said John Henry Cooper, "to say what will come next!"

Cuthbert went off; and as this first train did not compel a delay at the junction, it was still quite early when he reached Kirk Hinton, where a Rilston fly was waiting for him, and in this he was soon driving up to the house of which he had heard so often, but which he had never seen.

The rain had all cleared off, the air was fresh and the sky blue, the old elms near the house stood up like pillars of gold, the house itself was clothed in every shade of russet and dark green. The first impression on one coming from the noisy, smoky Ingleby was of utter peace.

Mrs. Palmer hurried out to meet him, with a sense of relief at sight of his brown, sensible face, and at sound of his kind, quiet voice, and behind her stood Godfrey with a dazed, scared look, and never a word of greeting.

"Oh, Mr. Staunton, I am indeed glad to see

some one to speak to. We have done nothing; Guy has been too ill to give directions, except to send for you, and Godfrey is not willing to act without him."

She proceeded, as he questioned her, to tell him of the events of the day before, and of Guy's condition. He had been a long time unconscious after his aunt's death, and had fainted over and over again afterwards. He was better now, but the doctor had insisted on perfect stillness, and had seemed much alarmed about him.

"I think," said Cuthbert, "that Guy has been too reserved about his state of health. He was not at all fit for so much exertion and for such a shock. But Godfrey, hadn't you better see if your aunt has left any directions, anything to show you what she wished?"

"She did, certainly," said Mrs. Palmer, "in a table by her bed. She told my daughter to burn a certain envelope if she gave her orders to do so, when Guy arrived."

"*What* did she tell her?" exclaimed Godfrey, suddenly.

"To burn a blue envelope. But as you know, dear aunt never spoke a word after Guy came, and if she had, I should never have allowed Jeanie to do such a thing."

Cuthbert was perplexed by Godfrey's scared look.

"Can *he* have seen the ghost?" he thought. "I think," he said aloud, "that you had better see if you can find any directions. May I go to Guy at once, Mrs. Palmer? I have been with him lately, and I think I shall know how to manage."

"Oh, Mr. Staunton, I am only too thankful to see you here, to share the responsibility."

When Guy looked up into his friend's welcome face, it seemed to Cuthbert that there was a new and different expression in the black-ringed eyes. The hands he held eagerly out, shook, and he was as white as his pillow; but the

colourless lips smiled a little, and in his eyes was a sort of triumph.

"I've been very bad. I mustn't talk," he whispered. "You'll understand, and not mind —if I get—frightened."

"I shall not mind at all. I'll take care of you. You'll be better in a few hours."

"Perhaps!" said Guy, quietly.

In the mean time, Godfrey, to whom Mrs. Palmer had given his aunt's keys, went into the deserted bedroom, and, shutting the door, sat down in an old square chair by the writing-table, and tried to collect himself and to command his senses.

Constancy had shown him that his action in disobeying the telegram had either been ridiculously childish, or despicably mean; in either case contemptible. The shock that met him on his arrival had startled away, for the moment, all feelings but those of real and natural grief, till the alarm at Guy's condition had forced him to recollect whose fault the

over-exertion had been, whose doing was whatever anxious waiting had befallen his old aunt on her death-bed, and whatever grief his brother would feel at being absent from it. And now the report of Jeanie's words filled him with a vague fear, born perhaps of his own bad conscience, which caused him to dread turning the key in the lock. There was, too, the first chilling experience of the change made by death. The day before, he would never have dreamed of touching those keys.

He opened the drawer, however, at last. There were various packets of bills and letters, and on the top a long white parchment envelope, a long blue one, and a smaller square one of the cream-laid paper, which Mrs. Waynflete had always used.

Godfrey took this last timidly in his hand. It was labelled, "Directions as to my Funeral." He looked at the parchment envelope on which was engrossed, "Last Will and Testament of Mrs. Margaret Waynflete, April 5th, 1880."

Then he looked at the blue one, and on this was written in his aunt's laboured writing—writing which, if not acquired, had been practised since childhood, "My Will, September 25th, 189–."

The blue envelope which his aunt had perhaps meant to destroy! Godfrey caught up all three documents in his hand, all were unsealed, but he could not resolve to open them by himself, and hurried up to Guy's room. On the way he met Jeanie, in a black frock, her face swelled with crying, and some autumn flowers in her hand.

Poor Jeanie! All that had passed bore for her the message, "We shall not live with Godfrey any more."

Godfrey caught her arm. "Jeanie, *what* did she say about the blue envelope?"

"She said, 'burn it,' if she told me, and she would perhaps tell me when Guy came. She was wondering why he did not come all day. She had never told us she wrote to him."

Godfrey dropped his hold and went on upstairs. He found Guy lying still, with Cuthbert beside him. There was but little light through the old-fashioned deep-set windows, and the room was full of the glow of the fire.

"Must Guy see these papers?" said Cuthbert, moving. "Can't we manage without troubling him?"

"I—I *cannot* look at them without Guy," said Godfrey, in confused, stammering accents.

"What is it?" said Guy. "About the funeral? Read it to me, I can listen."

Godfrey slowly took the paper out of the square envelope, his hand shook, and he could not get his voice. Cuthbert took it from him, and read—

"It is my desire that I should be buried by my husband's side in Ingleby churchyard, and that all members of my husband's family, who are within reach, should be invited to attend. Also all my work-people. I wish Matthew Thompson, of Ingleby, to be the undertaker,

and that everything should be done the same as at my husband's funeral. I consider that in being laid in my grave at Waynflete, I should be putting a slight on my dear husband, which I am not willing to do. I have sometimes regretted that I gave up my married name, and I should wish it to be placed on my tombstone. Waynflete belongs to the one of my great-nephews I consider the least likely to follow the evil example of those who went before him, and I hope he will restore the family to its right position, and lead a sober and God-fearing life. Also that he will never consider himself above the business, to which he owes his education and his property. And I hope that those who come after me will conduct the business honestly, and never take a penny that is not fairly earned.

"And I wish it to be remembered that the recovery of Waynflete is owing to my having kept to one purpose all my life, and to my dear husband's generosity and business abilities.

"I desire that my Will may be read at once on my decease, as I object to people's minds being disturbed at such times by speculations. I have acted all my life on such judgment as the Almighty has chosen to give me, and though I have endeavoured to reflect on my past conduct, I cannot see that I have judged amiss.

"I forgive all my enemies. I forgive every one who made a mock of my family when I worked in the mill. I forgive my brother's wife, who was a fine lady, and no good to him. I forgive Vendale, Vendale and Sons, who supplied me with worthless goods, and charged a dishonest price for them. I consider that I was wrong in objecting to my great-nephew Guy forgiving the enemies of his family, though I warn him not to gamble or lay bets with a person who comes of Maxwell blood. And I pray that my trespasses may be forgiven, as I forgive other peoples'.

"MARGARET WAYNFLETE."

There was a silence as Cuthbert ceased. He himself felt how strange it was that he should be the reader of this manifesto. Godfrey sat on the foot of the bed, his face turned away and his broad shoulders heaving. Guy listened intently. He was the first to speak, in a quiet level tone.

"Now, let us look at the Will. Give it to me."

Cuthbert took up the blue envelope, opened it, and put the long parchment it contained into Guy's hand, helping him to raise himself a little. Godfrey hid his face in his hands.

Guy looked down the page with his lips set hard. He laughed a little as he read to himself, then flung the parchment towards his brother.

"You can act for yourself, now, Godfrey," he said. "Aunt Margaret has followed out her principles. *You* are the one least likely to follow the sins of our fathers, and you are master of Waynflete. So—so—*that* couldn't have been what '*He*' wanted?"

"She meant to burn it—and I will," cried Godfrey, seizing the paper. "So help me, God, I'll never——"

"Hold hard!" cried Guy, starting up and seizing his arm, "don't be such an infernal fool! Stop him, Cuthbert!"

But Cuthbert had already laid detaining hands on the parchment.

"Stop—stop. That's no earthly good. I've seen it. I'll not allow it to be done. Hang it all, Godfrey, come to your senses, and control yourself!"

"Guy," cried Godfrey, rushing back and throwing himself on his knees beside him. "You know—you know I did not want it. Say you know it, or I shall go mad. I wanted to keep you from Moorhead—I never thought—I did not know—— If I had—and now it is too late——"

"What's all this?" said a new voice, as the doctor came into the room. "Funeral? You'll have two funerals to arrange for, Mr. Godfrey

if you can't settle this one without your brother. Go at once, and take all your confounded business papers with you."

But Cuthbert, not thinking Godfrey's hands safe ones, put both the wills into his own pocket, and giving the stupefied, half-maddened youth the paper of directions, told him to give it to Mrs. Palmer, and pushed him out of the room, shutting the door behind him.

Godfrey stumbled past Mrs. Palmer as he met her on the stairs, and threw the paper towards her. "Telegraph—settle it," he said, and pushing blindly on to the old unused library, shut himself into it.

A young man, with a strong *physique*, sufficient talent, and a good wholesome record, is unaccustomed to emotional agonies, Godfrey woke from the simple take-it-for-granted life of healthy, prosperous youth, to the dreadful consciousness of having committed a disgraceful action, from which he reaped advantage at his brother's expense.

The cruel wound of a slighted and rejected passion had sapped his powers of endurance. He went a little mad for the time under the awful pressure. At whatever cost, it must be lightened.

He stood in the window leaning his head against the black oak panel behind him, and staring out with haggard eyes at the fair fields and gardens, which were, it seemed, his own; the hateful inheritance which he had gained for himself.

He could not bear the days as they passed, he could not look into a human face, much less into that of his brother, unless he could find some means of lightening his passionate self-disgust. He took his way slowly through the darkened house up to the chamber of death.

Margaret Waynflete was still lying in the octagon room where her end had come upon her. The place had all been made scrupulously tidy, and the little bedstead was standing in the middle of the polished floor. There was no

attempt at softening the chill, bare fact of death, by flowers or lights. "Aunt Waynflete wouldn't have liked it," Mrs. Palmer said, in answer to Jeanie's faint suggestion; nor was there any emblem of hope and faith.

The white, cold daylight came in through the half-closed shutters, and fell upon the grand and awful outlines of the tall old woman whose vigour in life emphasized the contrasting stillness of death. The long, strong hands that had worked so hard, the strong will that had known no paralyzing doubts, were idle and inoperative now.

Godfrey had never seen death before, and he saw it with a grim and unsoftened aspect; but he was so set on his own purpose that his natural grief and awe were in abeyance.

He stood by the prostrate figure looking down at it, while the picture over his head looked at them both.

Then he knelt down, and laid his hand on that of the dead woman, starting a little at the un-

accustomed chillness of the touch, and before her face, and in the sight of God, he vowed that he would never profit by the results of his wicked action, never enjoy the fortune from which he had ousted Guy, never be master of Waynflete.

"As *she* had one purpose, so will I. I'll free myself from this property that ought not to be mine, and till I have, I'll seek no good for myself, and I'll have no other object. Even Constancy shall not come before it. So help me, God!"

Then Godfrey got up from his knees, and felt the sting of shame and self-reproach a little blunted, so that his natural reticence and pride began to revive, and he felt that he would behave properly and not make the family affairs a spectacle for surprised and disapproving Palmers.

He did not again go near Guy, who was, indeed, quite unfit to talk to him, and who puzzled Cuthbert more than ever, as,

even while the perilous faintness was hardly kept at bay, he whispered, with a sort of triumph—

"Remember; if I *die*, I'm not beaten."

"I shall remember," said Cuthbert, quietly. He could not himself resist the discomfort of the creaks and the whispers, the cracks and the murmuring which were always the talk of visitors to Waynflete; he noticed the low, incessant sound of the horseman coming nearer and never coming close. He turned his head to the window as the dusk was closing in, and Guy said, coolly—

"That's the horseman, I suppose, I never heard it before. Miss Vyner says it is certainly the effect of wind in the narrow valley.'

"I suppose all old houses have odd noises," was Cuthbert's original remark.

"Yes; there's nothing in these. I say, where are those two wills?"

"I have them safe till the solicitor comes."

"Read the last one over. I must know

about the mill. Excite me? No. I'm getting better."

Cuthbert judged it best to comply, and Guy lay quite still and listened.

"Ha!" he said finally; "there's a chance then for us."

He smiled his secretive, self-reliant smile, and said nothing further; but in a few minutes more he beckoned Cuthbert close, and grasped his arm, as if in agony beyond control. But he mastered himself at last.

"I *will* not go crazy!" he muttered, and, at length, clinging to the hand that seemed to hold him back from the abyss, he fell asleep.

The young vicar of the parish came to offer help, and the family solicitor, Mr. Manton, arrived on the next morning, much hurt that his old client should have made a second will without applying to him. He interviewed his Rilston brother, and even hinted a question as to the old lady's faculties; but every one in

the house answered for her full possession of these to the last. He managed the arrangements for the funeral, which was to take place on the Tuesday, at Ingleby, a short service being held first in the old church at Waynflete. This was the vicar's proposal, and by Guy's desire, it was accepted.

"I shall be able to go on Tuesday," he said; "and, Cuthbert, I want you to send for a beautiful white wreath for me. Yes; I know Aunt Margaret disapproved of flowers, but I want this one."

In spite of this disapproval, when a wreath of deep-coloured autumn flowers came from Constancy, "more like her than white flowers, and in memory of an intercourse, unlike every other to me;" there was no question as to its use.

Rawdie, miserable in the changed house, took refuge in Guy's room.

"We can sympathize," said Guy, with an odd look; and he liked to have his hand on

the long, hairy slug, as Rawdie lay stretched out beside him.

Rawdie's master kept away until the Monday evening, when Guy sent for him, and he went reluctantly, and with secret dread.

Guy was dressed, and sitting up by the fire.

"Come in, Godfrey," he said; "I'm much more fit to-day, and I want to talk to you before to-morrow."

Godfrey sat down and looked at him. He had so much to say that he was quite silent.

"There'll be a good deal to surprise you, presently," said Guy; "but as to the will, it represents Aunt Margaret's wishes exactly. She had very good reason to distrust me, and the end has been shaped, no doubt, quite rightly."

"She would have burnt it, but for me," said Godfrey.

"What do you mean?"

"She meant to burn it if you came in time.

She told Jeanie so; and—I tore up your telegram, and did not send the trap on purpose."

"What did you do that for?"

"It was my last chance of a word with—with Constancy Vyner; and I thought you wanted to go to Moorhead—to get the chance."

"Well," said Guy, slowly, "I shouldn't have thought it of you."

"I met the telegraph-boy on the bridge. I shouldn't have thought it of myself. I believe some fiend lay in wait to tempt me."

"Very likely he did! Well, I've never had any thought of Miss Vyner. Of course, I have always known that you were gone on her—you wasted your trouble."

Even at that moment, Godfrey felt a sense of relief at the convincing dryness of Guy's tone. But it stung him.

"I was mad," he said; "but don't imagine I shall profit by the consequences. I shall treat the will as so much waste paper. As if it had been burnt, as it ought to have been."

"There are two words to that," said Guy.

"I've spoken mine," said Godfrey, standing up and speaking hotly. "I swore before—by her side, as solemnly as I knew how, that I wouldn't inherit under that will, and I will not."

"*What* did you do?"

Then Godfrey told him what he had done, ending passionately, with—

"I could never have faced you otherwise."

"You have only got yourself and everybody into a hopeless hole. Making vows like a romantic girl, which depend on your own state of mind for their meaning," said Guy, angrily. "The fiend was handy then, I should say;" and he laughed in an odd, fierce fashion.

"I know what I meant," said Godfrey; "but, of course, I've given you the right to say what you please to me."

"No," said Guy, after a moment's silence. "Don't be angry. I'm disappointed, and there's more in it than I can tell you now. But—shake

hands. There's only us two in the world. Of course I knew you wouldn't wrong me of a halfpenny. And I'll take good care no one thinks you have."

Godfrey shook the offered hand, in a formal, schoolboy fashion. He had nothing more to say. His feelings were too strong to be articulate, and he was, moreover, desperately afraid of making Guy faint.

So that he was not sorry when Cuthbert came back and turned him out. He had made his confession, but nothing in those dreary days seemed real to him, not even himself.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WHITE WREATH.

THERE could not be much sorrow at Waynflete for so new a comer, but there was much respectful interest. All the villagers crowded into the little church and churchyard on the stormy morning of Mrs. Waynflete's funeral, at their head "soft" Jem, with a bit of crape on his sleeve; and the neighbouring gentry and clergy either came themselves or sent their carriages to follow the procession from the church to Kirk Hinton station. The actual mourners were few, and Cuthbert Staunton came into the church behind the two brothers.

"She said that she forgave your family," Guy

said gravely. "It is right that you should be there."

Guy seemed quite able to bear his part. He hardly looked paler than Godfrey, and was less agitated, as he stood with the white wreath in his hand, looking down at the pavement. It was a day of heavy driving clouds, and the light in the dark old church dimmed and brightened alternately, catching now and then the stony figures of the older Waynfletes, till Cuthbert felt as if it would hardly have surprised him if the ghostly form of the traitor ancestor had stood among the mourners and mocked their grief. It grew so dark as the service went on that he could see little but the fair heads of the two brothers before him, and the white surplice of the vicar.

The prayers and hymns were over, the coffin was lifted up again and carried out across the nameless grave of the unhappy Guy, whose shortcomings she who was gone had retrieved

so resolutely. But the Guy who followed the funeral, who had also lost the inheritance for himself, stopped short. He stooped and laid the white and scented wreath over the brief record on that unhonoured stone, then drew himself up, and slowly and resolutely looked all round the church, his eyes resting at last on the door in front of him. There was, or Cuthbert fancied so, an instant's recoil, then he walked straight on, as if he were walking up to a cannon's mouth, and followed the coffin out of the church. Godfrey, who had stood with drooping head, fighting with boyish tears, stared after him in amazement at his action.

The long drive to Kirk Hinton, and the weary commonplaces of the railway journey were got through in time, and at Ingleby station the scene changed. The invited guests were waiting on the platform—rough, sensible-looking business men, with some few of the more nearly connected ladies, in handsome black.

Outside, it might have been the burying of a princess—the open space in front of the station was filled with grave, weather-beaten faces. And two and two, the work-people, in their Sunday clothes, formed behind the funeral party and walked after them through the smoky town, into the big, ugly parish church, full of pews and galleries, and with plain square windows letting in a dull glare of cold grey light. It was soon filled to overflowing with silent men and women.

There were only two surpliced figures; but in the west gallery were the choir, by their own request, and the funeral hymn rose up, full, sweet and strong, joined in by all the vast concourse of people.

Then they passed out into a large churchyard, filled with square grey stones, in which the family vault of the Palmers had been opened, and there Margaret Waynflete's body was laid among those for whom, and with whom, she had worked through all her long life.

In consideration of Guy's fatigue, and of Godfrey's obstinate reluctance to take his place, there was no formal meal, but the party gathered in the big dining-room at the Mill House, where various cold refreshments were placed on the table, with a great display of heavy, handsome plate.

Presently Guy, after such civilities as were required of him, raised his voice above the decorous murmur of the guests, and said—

"I have asked Mr. Manton to read aloud my great-aunt's will, as I have no doubt every one here will wish to know what it is. And, first, I wish to say that, though its contents were a great surprise to my brother Godfrey, they were not at all unexpected by me. I know the grounds on which my aunt acted, and I am fully aware that, to the best of her belief, she acted rightly."

It perhaps goes without saying that the two young Waynfletes were not very popular with the Palmer clan. Guy, in especial, with his

delicate face and girlish eyes, was an incomprehensible person to them. He compelled attention now, however, as after this little speech he sat down near the head of the table, while Godfrey shrank into a dark corner, only withheld from a protest by the force of his brother's will.

In the silence that ensued, the solicitor began to read; the various Palmers listened critically, John Cooper and Joshua Howarth, with their two sons, with deep anxiety. They listened to the statement of various legacies to old servants, and more considerable ones to Cooper and Howarth, and then to the startling fact that Godfrey Waynflete was to be heir of Waynflete Hall and all the land belonging to it, and of certain sums of money invested in various railways and securities. The management of the business was entirely in the hands of the two brothers, and Ingleby Mill House was also left for the use of both or either as should be convenient, neither being able to let

or sell it without the consent of the other. It was soon evident to the intelligent audience that besides the money spent on Waynflete, and invested in the business, the fortune realised was unexpectedly small, and the long-standing family suspicion of Thomas Palmer's wisdom in leaving everything in the hands of his wife gained in strength.

Godfrey heard nothing after the little murmur of surprise that greeted his name. His ears and face burned and tingled with the sense of shame and wrongful dealing.

Guy sat looking at the table. He knew, of course, exactly what was coming, but the sound could not be other than bitter. He knew that his character was gone in the eyes of these shrewd, suspicious men of business. He set his mouth hard, and his eyes fell on the old-fashioned stand of small cut-glass spirit-decanters that stood in front of him. He stretched out his hand and poured out a wine-glassful of whisky. He forgot the will, and

ceased to hear the solicitor as he drew it towards him, till Mr. Manton, in the long dry catalogue of farms and fields, read: "the land going by the name of Upper Flete, lying between the river and the township of Kirk Hinton——" Guy moved his hand, and knocked the full glass over, then pushed his chair back from the table, and sat absolutely still till the reading was over.

"Well, Mr. Guy," said Mr. Matthew, the oldest and most important of the Palmers, "your great-aunt was a very shrewd woman of business, for a woman, so to speak, and you don't seem to have met with her approval."

"No," said Guy, shortly, "I did not. Hush, Godfrey," he added, as the poor boy pushed desperately forward and stood beside him. "Hold your tongue—there's nothing you can say. We understand each other."

"I've been at work in Ingleby Mills for sixty-five years," said John Cooper, coming to the front, "and I'm not at all dissatisfied

to work under Mr. Guy. He knows the business as well as a lad of his age can do."

"Thank you, John Cooper," said Guy, with a look of almost disproportionate pleasure. He rose rather unsteadily, and caught at Godfrey's arm. "Come," he said, in a sharp, imperative whisper, "get me out of sight."

He rather pulled Godfrey, than was guided by him, through the door behind him into the empty library, and sank into a chair, while Godfrey broke down into a tempest of uncontrollable misery.

"Now, look here," said Guy, in the same faint, sharp tones, "you have nothing like the bargain you think for. To-morrow I'll go into it all. I'm done for now; you must manage without me."

How Godfrey managed through the rest of the hateful formalities of that wretched day he hardly knew; but when it was at last over, and he went to bed, he was so worn out with

the weary misery of it that he fell dead asleep and slept till morning. He woke, with a sudden impulse so strong upon him that it seemed like an inspiration that had come in sleep. He would cut the whole concern. He would take his younger brother's fair portion, whatever it might be, and make a new life for himself, somewhere, at the ends of the earth, away from Constancy's scorn and his own conscience. So he would keep his vow, and cut the knot which he himself had tied so tight. Then Guy would see that he must take his own, and *she* would no longer despise him. A definite purpose, however rash, made him feel more himself. As he came downstairs he met Cuthbert.

"Guy wants you to go down to the mill," he said, "and tell old Mr. Cooper that he will see him to-morrow, and to ask for any message from him. And then he wants to talk to you. He will do it; but be as careful as you can. He is not fit for business."

"Very well," said Godfrey; "I want to talk to him too. He won't mind what I want to tell him, and it won't take five minutes to discuss it."

CHAPTER X.

GRIT.

GODFREY paid but scant attention to poor old Cooper's feelings when he reached the mill. He hardly took the trouble to glance round him, and never realised that he was, in part, owner of the great concern, and a person on whom its future depended. He gave Guy's message, and asked indifferently if there was any in return. Cooper looked up the whole length of the young man's tall figure, ending with the gloomy, indifferent face.

"Nay," he said, "I've no message to send by you, Mr. Godfrey."

"All right, then," said Godfrey, going, still thinking of nothing but his own purpose.

He found Guy on the sofa in the study, with some papers in his hands. Godfrey sat down opposite, and stared straight before him. Guy lay, looking down, very quiet but with a curious air of something held under and suppressed.

"I'm not up to long explanations," he said; "but you ought to know at once that matters are in a bad way at the mill. It will take every penny we both possess, and all the energy and sense too, to pull through and turn the corner. Things have been going downhill for some time. Look here——"

Here he showed the statement which he had partly prepared to lay before his aunt, adding a few explanations and comments.

"Then—is the mill going to fail?" said Godfrey, confusedly.

"Not if I can help it," answered Guy. "No! But we've got our work cut out for us."

"But we couldn't take out—realise—any part of the capital."

"Rather not," said Guy, with a shrug. "But what I want to say is this. You can't do anything till you have taken your degree—except give your consent to certain measures. I'll explain by-and-by. But, then, if you come back, and give your mind to it and work, as the old folks did, we'll get on our legs again. I—of course Aunt Margaret thought you would be able to live at Waynflete."

"Nothing would induce me to live at Waynflete, apart from the horrible injustice of it—I hate it. I should never endure it!"

"Shouldn't you?" said Guy, and paused for a minute. "Then, I think you should use some of the investments to put it properly to rights, and let it again. Don't sell it."

"I don't regard it as mine to sell," said Godfrey; "and no—that would be undoing all she lived for."

"Just so. And remember this. We owe it to her strong purpose that we're not driving some one else's plough, or working at some one

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else's looms; that we are as we are, such as it is. That work can't be undone. I don't mean to give up. But, I can't depend on my own health, or powers; I mayn't live long, or be able to work constantly. But if you co-operate, we'll pull through. Aunt Margaret trusted you, and you're bound not to disappoint her. Her memory *shall* not be dishonoured."

Guy was moved to speak more warmly from the kind of stupefaction with which Godfrey heard him. He thought that he had been too abrupt.

"You're surprised," he said more gently. "I've known how it was for a long time. It's not at all a hopeless case."

"I can't take it in," said Godfrey. How could he propose to "cut the whole concern," and go away in the face of this news. Even if he went without a penny, how could he leave his sick brother with such a weight on his shoulders? Did dropping Waynflete out of his hands merely mean shirking a hard struggle?

At any rate, he could not tell Guy his intention at that minute.

"You know," said Guy, "after all the legacies are paid, and Waynflete is put to rights, I'm afraid you'll have very little ready money. The work of restoring the family isn't complete. You've got it to finish."

"If—if the will had been burned, you wouldn't have sold Waynflete, and put the money into the business?"

"*No!*" said Guy. He stopped to rest a minute, and then said, "If the business really failed, neither of us could honourably keep Waynflete. It would have to be sold to pay the creditors. And it is possible that, to save the business—— But no, Godfrey—no—it won't come to that. It shall not. Aunt Margaret shan't be defeated."

"I'll think it over," said Godfrey, after a moment. "Ought I to take my degree?"

"Of course, what's the use of leaving a thing half-finished? But you'll have to understand a

little what has to be done at once, and give your consent to it. I'll tell you about it another time. Take these papers, and read them."

"Yes," said Godfrey, escaping; "anything. I consent to whatever you wish. That is the least I can do!"

So then, there was no such easy way of escape as he had hoped. It was a burden, not an honour, that he had unduly won. For the momentary act there was no momentary atonement; but years of uncongenial labour. He hated the mills. Surely, if he dropped all claim on the profits, and gave his brother an entirely free hand, it would be enough? He would willingly sell Waynflete, and throw the price into the business, if Guy had not objected so vehemently. He had thought that his mind was settled, and behold! it was more unsettled than ever before. To give Waynflete to Guy, he could have worked tooth and nail; without a settled purpose, he was all at sea.

Guy felt a little baffled and disappointed.

He had expected to find, as he put it, more grit in Godfrey.

"I suppose you will have to go away soon," he said to Cuthbert afterwards.

"Yes—on the 18th, I fear—but I want you to come with me. There's no one here to look after you even as clumsily as I can. I suppose Mrs. Palmer stays; but her notions are limited to good beef-tea."

"It's not a bad notion. Cuthbert, don't you want to know what happened to me?"

"Yes—when you can tell me."

"I'm going to tell you now. Come here—quite close—lock the door first."

Cuthbert did as he was told, and sat down quietly.

"Well," he said, "how was it?"

"Well, that night when I was walking from Kirk Hinton, I got on very slowly, and it was a long—long time."

"Yes—you got very tired."

"Yes, but I thought hard. I almost made

up my mind that the whole thing was a craze inherited from the other Guy, or at least shared with him. I thought nothing existed outside my own brain; that the old Guy had probably got drunk at the old public in the valley, and that I should too. That the cause of the whole horror was in *me,* because my brain was made wrong or crooked."

He paused, and Cuthbert said no more than, "Well?"

"You've always wanted me to think that. You don't know what it's like to think so, when there is a great horror that your brain has made for you."

Guy spoke very quietly. Cuthbert hardly ventured to answer him. "You would never understand what I meant by 'feeling.' But then I felt—*nothing.* I don't think even Christ felt like that—quite, when He said God had forsaken Him. For *I* felt that there was no one even to forsake me."

"But, my dear boy," exclaimed Cuthbert,

distressed, "I do not think so. I never meant to teach you to think so. That one hallucination——"

"If you knew what a spiritual presence in your soul is, good or evil—you would know what is involved in finding it a delusion. I was *glad* when I felt him come."

"Did you see—it?"

"I saw the figure on the bridge, standing in my way. Well, it was a question of drowning myself or letting him drown me. I was almost mad—I—I think he laughed at me—I'm not sure. His eyes——"

Guy dropped his voice, and into his own eyes there came a wild, uncertain look, as of a sorely shaken brain. But he sat up and spoke emphatically.

"Suddenly I knew that I could try to get across. That's the point, you see, Cuthbert—that's the point! One can try, one *can* fight — devil or delusion — I don't know which—one can resist, and he will flee.

I think he will always flee—for there's help. *All* spiritual presences are not evil; something helped me. I fainted, I suppose; but I got across the river—I set myself to get on, but the hill was so steep—and long—I was so deadly faint. It took an awful time, I had to stop so often; oh, I don't wonder the other Guy was too late! But I got there in time. Aunt Margaret knew it, she quite understood."

"It is all over now," said Cuthbert, soothingly; "you won't see the figure again."

Guy slowly turned his eyes away from Cuthbert's face, and looked straight in front of him.

"I see it now," he said. "Listen—don't stop me. I saw it ahead all the way. I've seen it ever since. But—but—it's not *him*—now. Oh, you won't understand. I *know* he's not here now. This is a spectre—a delusion—but it's very bad to bear. Stop; let me rest a bit."

He put his hand over his eyes and lay still—whispering, "I've some more to say."

"Yes, tell me everything—tell me just what it is," said Cuthbert, gently.

"I can't," said Guy. "Shakespeare was right—and it's very hard to be quite sure. The more one thinks, the harder it is. But whatever that is—which comes to me, I *can* fight it; I *can* resist. And I will. I mustn't give in an inch. I've got to hold on with the business, and against the drink, and against the terror. That's all I know; but I know that, though I've almost died of learning it."

Guy turned faint after this eager speech, and was forced to lie back and be silent. Presently he spoke again in a faltering whisper—

"Doesn't all this——"

"What, my boy? Yes, tell me."

"It is so queer—you'll dislike me for it," said poor Guy, simply, and with tears in his eyes. "Anybody would."

"Well, I don't," said Cuthbert, in his dry, gentle voice. "You know, I promised to see you through."

"It eases me so to have you know it. But no one else—promise me—no one else."

"Well—but your best help in the fight would be the doctor."

"Oh yes—you may tell him anything you like, anything you can. The real thing is past man's understanding. Only," and he collected his strength, and looked up again steadfastly, "remember—devil or delusion—it is not irresistible, and I can resist."

When Guy, soothed by his friend's sympathy, had dropped into a much-needed sleep, Cuthbert still sat beside him puzzled, and, spite of himself, awed by the terrible story. He could not forget the records of that earlier struggle, which had come into his hands, and which Guy must see, as soon as he was fit to do so. He did not understand the experience enough to see why, as he put it, in the half-jesting thought with which deep feeling veils itself, Guy preferred the devil to a delusion. But he saw that mind and soul and body were all in danger, and he

recognized that the belief in a resisting power must be fostered and guarded to the utmost.

"Only his faith can save him," thought Cuthbert, with a mental start at the familiar ring of words, of which he had never made any personal application.

"It's beyond me," he thought, "and I'll take off my hat and wait. He may be crazed, but he's pretty much of a hero. And as for disliking him—well—not much fear of it. I'll do all I know for him."

Then Cuthbert thought the whole matter through, from beginning to end, and finally, with wise and uncommon mental patience, made up his mind not to rush in like a fool, where a man of any ordinary experience might well fear to tread. He would take every care of Guy; but, in that unknown region of his trial, he would let him judge for himself.

CHAPTER XI.

HELPING AND HINDERING.

After Godfrey's wild visit to Moorhead, the first news that came to Constancy and Florella from Waynflete, was the announcement to their aunt from Mrs. Joshua Palmer of the death in the family. It came after they had joined her at Harrowgate, and was quite short and formal, without any mention of the two young men.

Constancy was honestly shocked and grieved. The high-spirited, vigorous old lady had struck her fancy, and the wreath she sent was a genuine expression of feeling.

The next thing was a polite visit from old Mr. Matthew, as it was the custom to call him, with his report of the funeral, and of the

contents of the will, together with his comments thereon.

"Neither of the lads looks as if he'd make a hand of the business. The eldest is but a poor, weakly fellow, and of course the old lady must have had very good reasons for passing him over and preferring his brother. Eh! they're a queer lot, are the Waynfletes, a bad stock—a bad stock—and that's a thing there's no getting over."

Mrs. John Palmer replied with polite hopes that their bringing up might have partly got over it; but though she was not very fond of her husband's family, on family occasions she remembered Palmer prejudices, and felt for the moment that the two Waynfletes were interlopers.

Constancy heard of Godfrey's inheritance with a great throb of surprise. How would he take it? How had it come about? She remembered how Guy had been sent for at the last, and she wondered, being keen enough

to guess how much there was to wonder at. Just before she left Yorkshire she received a letter. It began abruptly—

"I am writing to you because, little as you may care to hear, I could never look in your face again, unless you knew the worst of me. Probably face to face I never shall see you, but let me at least have the right to think of you with less utter shame. My aunt intended, if my brother had obeyed her summons at once, to have talked over business matters with him, and to have destroyed the will in my favour, under which I have the misfortune to inherit. I first of all forgot, in my preoccupation, to post her letter to Guy, so that he could not come till the later train, and then, as you know, in my mad desire to see you once more, and alone, I failed to send to meet him at Kirk Hinton. If he had come in the morning, as but for me he would, probably my aunt's accident would never have happened, and he could have satisfied

her mind on the points between them. As it was, he only came just before the end, when, though she knew him, she could not speak to him. Moreover, the long walk and the hurry and shock, all through my act, so injured him, that I thought his death, as well as all the rest, would lie at my door. I see Staunton thinks it may be so even yet. Guy has been most generous to me, but that only increases the dreadful weight of remorse that lies on me. You will see how impossible it is that I should profit by the results of my own wicked jealousy. I have pledged myself never to do so. I have now no right to tell you that I love you, or to come forward for your favour any more. I have often been stung by your contempt; but you see it was quite justifiable. I have but one purpose now, to free myself from the responsibilities I have brought on myself. Guy insists on my taking my degree, and by the time that is done, I hope my course may be clear to me. I mean this letter for a farewell.

Don't think I hope that you will answer it. Even now, I can't be sorry that I love you. In the very ends of the earth I shall remember you. I have often said that nothing should come between me and my longing for you, but my own violence has put me off from you. I have loved you a great deal better than my honour, and you were right to turn away. But, oh, Constancy, you are the one thing in the universe to me, and no one else will ever love you half so much. I feel as if I must some day wake from a dream, and find myself fit and free once more to move Heaven and earth in my cause, and to win you yet. Say what you will, I believe that I could. But now I can only sign myself in the fullest meaning of the word, unworthy as I am to use it,

"Yours faithfully,

"GODFREY WAYNFLETE."

Constancy read this letter through with

burning cheeks, and feelings in her heart that showed themselves as impatient anger. She quite understood it, and Godfrey stood out before her mental vision, vivid and picturesque with his single aim, and his single heart. But her soul rebelled against the demand on her sympathy. Like all people of strong imagination, she was a moral coward; to enter into the depths of such passionate remorse—such devotion of purpose, was too serious, too absorbing a thing. To realise it, so as to say anything real about it, demanded too much, and she scorned such unreality as she recognized. She knew that an appeal had been made to her, not so much for her love, as for the support of her comprehension. She could not say soft, unmeaning words; she knew what was asked of her much too well. She could have comprehended him and helped him through, but, "I don't believe in the need of it all!" she said to herself. "He had much better forget all about it, and turn away to something fresh.

I don't want to go down into the depths with him. I want my own soul to myself."

So she got a little sheet of rough, square paper, and wrote upon it a little note in the individual characteristic hand which was like nobody else's.

"DEAR MR. WAYNFLETE,

"I was extremely sorry to hear of dear Mrs. Waynflete's death. I never knew any one like her, and she was very kind to me. I can't think that she would have altered her intentions at the last moment, though I am sure you must be very sorry to have prevented your brother from coming to her sooner. I hope he will soon be quite well again. I never think there is much good in dwelling on things that are over and done with. Do you think anything ever matters quite as much as one thinks it does? I cannot pretend to be so constant to the past. And blaming one's self only makes one stupid and spoils one's future

chances. All sorts of new things will be sure to happen, and whatever is, is likely to be just as right as anything else.

"Yours truly,

"CONSTANCY VYNER."

"There! It would be rather horrid of me not to write," she thought, as she directed the rough square envelope, "but I couldn't enter into all those desperate heroics." Yet all the while she was preaching new things, the image of such a desperate hero was forcing itself on her imagination, a story built itself up in her mind, in which the nobleness of such a single aim, the grandeur of such depth of feeling was shown in clear, strong outline. But in real life the type was too inconvenient.

Perhaps it was in defiance of an uneasy conscience, to prove to herself her own self-satisfaction, that she showed Florella the letter, and described her answer to it.

"Why don't you speak, Flo?" she said

impatiently. "You make my soul wriggle before you. What have I done?"

"Nothing, it seems," answered Florella, in sombre tones.

"Well, what could I do? I should be very wrong to encourage him, and he would take it as encouragement if I went down with him into such a Slough of Despond!"

"Did you really want him to think that what he did was of no consequence? I wonder if you have succeeded."

"I don't mean to have anything to do with him," said Constancy, resolutely.

But she knew in her secret soul that she had been a coward.

She went back to college, to all the engrossing interests of college life, and Florella returned with her aunt to London, for a winter to be spent partly in the ordinary duties and pleasures of a young lady at home, and partly in the steady and careful study of her art.

For what was she to Guy Waynflete but a

slight acquaintance, a girl who had met him a few times, and with whom his intercourse had been so slight as hardly to raise a remark.

That was strange, when all the force her spirit could transmit went into her promised prayers for him, and, when to such entire ignorance of what had outwardly happened, she united that inner sense of living with him through all. The contrast made her shy of mentioning his name; but when some few days after her return to town, she went over one afternoon to the Stauntons, it was with the hope of hearing something about him. She was told that Miss Staunton would be in directly, if she liked to go upstairs and wait for her, and she went up into the pleasant shabby drawing-room. Some one was lying back in a low easy-chair by the fire, and Florella knew in a moment that it was Guy himself.

He sat up and looked at her with an eager, half-doubtful, half-delighted look, but though her heart gave a great throb, she came forward

holding out her hand, and speaking in her soft, composed voice.

"Mr. Waynflete! Please don't get up. I hope you are better."

"Oh yes! But Staunton has made me come up with him to see the doctor again. We came yesterday; I was tired to-day, so I have only just come downstairs. But I am a great deal better."

After this Florella sat down on a low chair in front of the fire, and there was a silence. She could speak no more commonplaces.

"You know," said Guy, after a minute, "that I was not beaten. I was not quite too late."

"Yes, I know."

"It was very hard.'

"Very."

"You helped me."

"I tried."

"Do you know *what* happened?"

"No."

"That doesn't matter. You mustn't know, you mustn't see. But enough strength came."

"Yes."

"I shall hold on, and you will—help."

"I will; I do."

'Pray for *my* soul."

"Yes."

They had spoken in low, quiet tones—the words seemed to drop out; but now the spell broke, and Florella looked away and spoke with a falter.

"But it has been very bad for you; you are ill—and things went wrong."

"Oh," said Guy, "I shall be able, I hope, to set things pretty right. I can get along——"

As he spoke there was a step, and Cuthbert came in, followed by his sister.

"Ah, Guy—here you are," he said. "Getting rested? I should think you wanted some tea."

There was a little bustle, and the tea-things were brought with a lamp, and in the talk that

followed, Florella learned more of how things were going at Ingleby. Godfrey had returned to Oxford; Mrs. Joshua Palmer and Jeanie were to stay on at the Mill House for the present; and Guy meant to go back there as soon as he had seen the doctor, and Cuthbert was claimed by his work.

"He has much business on hand," Staunton told her aside; "but I cannot think how he will get on in that dull house. I wish the doctor would insist on sending him abroad. But he wouldn't go; his heart is set on his work."

"Then I think the work is best for him," said Florella.

"Yes, one can't interfere. But it is a frightful risk. I believe he'll kill himself over it."

Cuthbert spoke with some irritation. He was very anxious, and his wise resolve was hard to keep. Florella's heart sank. She might lend Guy her strength for the battle, but she could not save him from a single blow.

They asked her to dine with them quietly on

the next night, and she gladly promised to come. She would hear a little more.

When she came, Guy seemed better. He sat by her at dinner, and joined in the cheerful trivial talk, with a look of ease and pleasure. They said nothing special to each other, there was hardly the ordinary consciousness of mutual attraction between them, yet she was happy, and he for once at rest.

After dinner there was music, and as Kitty Staunton played softly, and they listened to it together, Guy watched her gracious harmonious outlines, and felt glad that her dress, though long and ruffed, with a broad silk sash, quite unlike the linen frock she had worn at Moorhead, was still of a soft tender blue. It still suggested the harebells. He said nothing more about himself; indeed he forgot himself and thought of her.

He wished her good night with a smile, and a long, steady look, as if he was drinking in the comfort of her presence. It never occurred to

him for a moment that the help she gave him was at the cost of suffering to herself. He did not understand that a star must burn before it can shine.

But when he went upstairs, and looked steadily round to face his enemy in a new place, he woke to the sense that, through all the evening he had never seen or dreaded him. The fear had been forgotten. With the first thought the strange thing was before him; but just then, he looked with indifferent curiosity. He had told his own story to the doctor, and had heard in return that he would risk his life by over-exertion, or by any mental shock or strain; and that rest, change, and amusement were by far the most likely cure for the nervous affection that troubled him, and for every other tendency that he had cause to dread.

"Still," said Guy, "there is no chance for me, but going back and doing what I can."

And to Cuthbert's surprise, the doctor gave in and admitted that a strong interest in his

work was good, and perhaps with due care, he had better try, for a time. Guy promised prudence, and gained his point.

He parted from his friend in the same determined fashion, though he did not try to hide that the parting was hard. Cuthbert wondered, as he had often wondered before, how any one could be at once so dependent and so self-reliant.

In the same breath he said, with wistful eyes, "You'll write to me often, won't you? Even a card; or if you just wire, it will be something;" and, "I can't help it, you know, if it does kill me; I've got to do it."

And the grounds of this conviction were quite incommunicable. As for Florella, she felt as if all power of "help" had deserted her, and that nothing was left but anxiety.

What had he known of her strange experience? When she had gone down into the depths with him, how had he known it? He had taken her knowledge for granted, and claimed her con-

tinual help. But *what* did she know, and what had she done? Florella's spirit dealt with strange things, and she paid the penalty of trouble and disturbance of soul. Thoughts and questionings which her young spirit could hardly bear, came to her, and since she had so thrown herself out of herself to aid him, the delicate balance of her nature was risked as well as his.

The minute and exceeding care with which she practised her flower-painting was her refuge and safeguard through these difficult months.

And she was not left alone, with only herself and Guy to think of. She had a great many acquaintances, old school-fellows, and others; some of whom were struggling to find a place among the workers of the day, others who were in the swing of the London circle to which Mrs. Palmer belonged.

Florella had always obtained confidences. Her reposeful manner, her good sense, and her kindliness brought them. But now she heard

story after story of trouble and temptation, perplexity, or discontent. "I always feel as if you could see my soul!" one girl said to her. She listened, and said such words as came to her. She felt sometimes as if she was in the very whirl and rush of life's battle, while outwardly nothing happened to her at all. She painted flowers, and went out to parties with her aunt.

CHAPTER XII.

HAREBELLS IN SNOW.

FIFTY thousand pounds! For a penniless girl to find herself suddenly possessed of such a golden dower is a very wonderful experience. This was the fate which, towards the end of November, descended upon little Jeanie Palmer, and, as she truly said, "It was quite upsetting." It came in a natural, though unexpected manner. An uncle died, possessed of a much larger fortune than had been supposed, and divided it by will, between Jeanie and another niece. That "something" might come to her from this quarter, her mother had always hoped; but nothing so splendid had ever been anticipated. It meant, in the first

place, frocks of an altogether different quality to any Jeanie had previously possessed; and, in the second, an entire change of plans for herself and her mother.

It had been a great advantage last summer to come to Ingleby, and live in so comfortable and dignified a fashion; but now Jeanie would have her own house, and needed her mother to arrange it for her.

Besides, Godfrey would be coming back, and if he chose to seek out Jeanie again, he should see her in a new light. No one would ever feel her to be anybody at Ingleby; but, among the Palmers, she would be now a person of consequence, and her mother told Guy that she was sorry to break up their comfortable arrangements, but Jeanie had business to attend to, and must go to old Mr. Matthew Palmer's, near Rilston, he being her trustee.

"I am very sorry you must go, Cousin Susan," said Guy, with perfect truth.

And yet it did not seem to the two ladies

that their presence in the house could have made much difference to him. Every hour that his strength held out he spent on his work, and when he was driven to what he called resting, he often shut himself up in the study, and what he did there, they knew not. He had what Mrs. Palmer called, "uncomfortable ways." They felt him to be an uncomfortable person. His colourless face and preoccupied eyes—eyes that seemed always watchful, but that watched for something out of other people's ken, like a wild creature's, who scents or hears some far-off foe—were too odd to be pleasant.

In the mill, however, he proved himself born to rule. In spite of his youth and his bad health, he made himself felt in every corner of it, and won allegiance, if not affection. It was not his way to be irritable, but he was always grave; often stern and sarcastic, determined and dictatorial as ever old Margaret had been in the hey-day of her strength. When he stood

leaning against the doorway of the long rooms, breathless with climbing the stairs, there was not a worker who did not wish to avoid his criticism; while the old managers gave in to his daring new departures, and never doubted that he could sail the ship.

His chief comfort was the entire and unexpected devotion of old John Cooper. He obeyed Guy loyally, but he also watched over him like a father. He had a careful old wife, who sent him in cups of tea, and provided him with luncheons, and this care he contrived should be extended to the young man too. He worked hard, so as to save him exertion, and never resented the quick, sharp orders, or the short, absent manner, and Guy was grateful—more grateful than he knew how to show. The old manager's devotion helped him very much. There was Rawdie, also, whom he had begged of Godfrey, who slept on his bed and nestled at his side, and was a living presence, and a loving one too.

If the demands of the business upon him saved his wits, it strained them to the utmost. It was touch and go with Palmer Brothers, all through the winter, and if Guy had not been as clever as he was desperate, they must have gone under. It was just a case of holding on. If that had been all, he could hardly have borne it. But such anxiety was swept out of his mind by the other thoughts that thronged upon him. He could not sleep, so he read half the night—medicine and science, metaphysics and religion, magic and mysticism, demonology and witchcraft, theories of heredity and legends of possession, psychical researches and spiritual revelations. And then it struck him that the Bible might throw some light on the subject. He had learned "divinity," and frequently heard and occasionally read the lessons, like other well-brought-up young men; but he had never read it with any personal object. He came to the conclusion that St. Paul knew something about the matter. "Resisting unto

death—striving against sin," exactly expressed it. And sometimes the foe pressed hard and home—and then there were perilous moments for reason's sway. Guy looked the haunting terror in the face. He took its likeness—"wrote it down," as he had said—spoke to it—defied it—well, those were times better forgotten, and when Rawdie hung on to his trousers and pulled him back, he knew that he was making a mad rush at—nothing at all. But more and more the conviction strengthened, that whatever personal influences shaped the forms of his experience, behind it lay a "power outside himself that made for" *evil,* a power at one with all the evil of the world. Where, then, was the power that makes for good?

He sat alone one evening by the study fire, and asked this question in vain. Could he hold on any longer? He was so lonely, and the weather was so cold, it took away all his little strength. Godfrey was not coming home for Christmas. Nerves and brain would endure

no longer the solitude—that was *not* solitude. He put his hand over his eyes.

"If Rawdie had not been there last night." But Rawdie had been there—there always was something. As to the mill, there were flashes of certainty as to the right course, and a word or a kindly deed of old Cooper's just gave strength to put them in practice. The sun struggled through the fog yesterday, and raised his spirits; the day before there was a letter from Cuthbert. Sometimes he dreamed of Florella, or the sense that she was "helping" pressed warm upon his soul. And now there was the connected thought of all these rescuing facts. But the source from which they came was veiled. He could not "feel" good as he "felt" evil. He could not trust himself to think of the gun in the gun-cupboard at the side of the bookcase, of the doctor's medicine, of which too large a dose would be so easy—of the brandy in the cellar—which would drown all this agony or give strength to defy

it. These images of escape pressed on him like living souls. Either would be so easy. Pray? Yes, but in such moments, before the prayer is offered, the victory must be won. The will of steel that had endured so much was breaking now. Guy got up and thought that he would look at that gun, which had been unused all the autumn. The drops were upstairs, and the brandy was in the cellar; but the gun was in the very room. He went over to the cupboard; but he was dizzy, and his hand shook a little; the key did not turn very easily. He fumbled with it. If he shot himself, what would happen to his double? Why—*that* would be gone out of the world with himself—and the world would go on without him. Would Florella ever learn to paint blue harebells in the sun? The dancing flowers shone and smiled before his mental vision. The key turned in his hand; but he turned it back again.

"I can bear it—another day," he thought,

as he leaned against the bookcase, with his hand still on the key.

Suddenly Rawdie burst into loud barking; the door bell pealed through the empty house. Guy started away from the cupboard, the room door opened, and a telegram was brought in.

"*Don't like your last note. Coming to you for Christmas; arrive* 9.30. *Staunton.*"

When the door was shut again, Guy flung the key of the gun-cupboard into the fire, and fell down on his knees and gave thanks. Assuredly it was not himself that had saved him.

When Cuthbert came, after a long day of travel from the far west, he found supper ready, lights bright and fire warm, and Guy with a welcome that was beyond words, quiet and even cheerful, but so white and worn, that his friend rejoiced in the sudden impulse that had induced him to brave his sisters' wrath, and give up Christmas at home to come to him.

"Why are you alone," he said. "Where is Godfrey?"

"Godfrey went off to the Rabys. He has got off the track altogether somehow; his degree, you know, was a disappointment—and—well, he'll have to come back soon and face matters out. Never mind! The mill hasn't yet put up the shutters, and I'm still here, you see, spite of the devil and all his angels, to say nothing of the frost, which I think is going to kill me, and save further trouble. No; but I'm rather bad, old fellow, and you've just come in time to take care of me, for I can't take care of myself a day longer. I get such bad nights, and I want you to read me to sleep, I'm so tired."

Guy gave himself up to the comfort of his friend's presence, with a grateful sense of his need of it. His boyish pride was gone. He told Cuthbert very little; but his silence was the reticence of one who knew that surface words were of no avail, and that no one's

opinion made any difference to his own judgment. He had regained the mastery of his nerves; but his strength had been over-taxed, and he could but just manage the most necessary business, till, when on Christmas Day itself, snow fell heavily and the frost intensified, the cold tried him so much that nothing but lying still by the fire was possible to him.

A belated postman struggled through the snow, with a bundle of letters, of which a whole sheaf of loving home greetings fell to Cuthbert's share; but to the lonely Guy, only a very smart Christmas card from Cousin Susan.

His home had never been a very tender one; but still, such as it was, he had lost it since last year. He felt hurt at his brother's silence, and his heart failed him utterly. Why struggle to keep hold of so hard a life? He turned his face towards the wall.

"Here's something for you," said Cuthbert,

as he opened his last letter. "Violet says, 'Florella Vyner asked me to send you this little drawing for Mr. Waynflete. She says he saw her failures in drawing harebells, last summer, and she hopes these will not look quite so bad, as it is winter now.' She—hum—ha—well—— Here's the drawing," said Cuthbert, breaking off as he read aloud.

Guy turned round with a start, and taking the envelope, opened it.

There, blue against the blue of heaven, was the little bunch of harebells, dim and cold doubtless, as compared to the originals in sun and light, but "living blue" still, fair enough to tell of springing thoughts and hopes and loves, in the dead cold of the winter snow.

A warm flush came over Guy's face. How much the high consolations within him were reinforced by this little bit of human joy! Hope and courage came back, and life was worth living again. Cuthbert watched him this time with full comprehension.

"Ah," he thought. "So—is that to be the cure?"

Violet had remarked that Florella was apparently too shy to send the card herself.

"But, it's no use pretending, she always manages to hear what we know about him. Don't you tell him I said so."

Cuthbert said nothing, for nothing was needed. A new vision had opened itself before Guy's spirit. Was the strange comprehension between himself and Florella to bloom out into so lovely a flower?

"I owe her all," he thought. "She set me fighting. I knew she was a saint and an angel. And I love her."

He took up his arms again with renewed courage. Before he won Florella, he must be free. She was not only a helping angel, she was his heart's love, and he must be strong enough to take care of her.

He gazed long at the little picture, then folded it away, and getting up from the sofa,

went over to the old piano, unused for many weeks, and began to play the old North-country Christmas hymn, familiar to his earliest childhood, "Christians awake." "I can't sing now," he said; but he hummed the words softly, and sang a line or two at intervals—

"Peace upon earth, and unto men good will."

"We'll have a little Christmas," he said, with a smile.

PART III.

THE CONTRAST.

"Fear not at all; for a slave, when he fears not, is free."—
ALGERNON SWINBURNE.

CHAPTER I.

HANDICAPPED.

In the meantime Godfrey, stung to the very quick by Constancy's shallow answer to the confession which he had forced from the depths of his soul, was kicking against the pricks of disappointed passion, and trying to persuade himself that they did not hurt him. He could not work, he barely scraped through his final examination; he could think of nothing but how to escape from himself. He could not face Guy till his plan of restitution was matured, and he caught at the Rabys' invitation to go and spend a gay Christmas among a lively set of other young people at Kirkton Hall. He was very miserable, but, when people are young and

strong, it is possible to be amused in spite of inward misery, and nobody guessed that Godfrey was either conscience-stricken or broken-hearted; and while he was thus keeping thought at bay, there befell him a great and unexpected temptation.

Jeanie, being now at Rilston with the Matthew Palmers, appeared on the scene in the altogether new light of a flattered and considered guest. She was talked of as a prize to be won, and in some occult and mysterious manner it was conveyed to Godfrey that this prize might be his for the asking.

Perhaps her Palmer kindred, who were people of much sense in a quiet way, knew what might be the lot of a simple and homely little girl whose great fortune bought a husband of good family and with bad debts. And Godfrey Waynflete, even if his fortune was not great, was no doubt a shrewd young fellow, or his shrewd old aunt would never have preferred him to his elder brother.

These ideas were conveyed by sober Palmer cousins to Godfrey's mind, and they offered him the chance of a life of his own apart from Waynflete and Ingleby. Guy would have fewer scruples if Godfrey did not need the wrongfully gained inheritance. These purposes served as excuses, but it is an old story and never a very creditable one; Godfrey's heart or, rather, his hand, was just ready to be "caught on the rebound." Constancy's contrast had a double charm. And Jeanie, who had always loved attention, now that she could attract it, like Miss Mercy Pecksniff, rose to the occasion. She had both sense and self-esteem, she was no longer the meek little cousin ready to make herself useful, and though she had an honest fancy for Godfrey, life had blossomed out with new possibilities. She knew very well that he had never sought her before, and she did not mean him to walk over the course. Pretended indifference was due to her ideas of propriety.

It was intoxicating to find herself made much of by a number of lively young people, all of the sort she knew, and liked, who flirted in her own style, and talked the kind of talk to which she could respond. Under such encouragement she was both pretty and lively, and the young folks at Kirkton and the neighbourhood had what Godfrey, and even Guy a year before, would have thought a very good time. One thing led to another, jokes to blushes, blushes to whispers, whispers to a half-acknowledged understanding, and almost before Godfrey knew what he was about he had practically committed himself, been laughed at and congratulated, and, by the time Christmas week was over, would have been irrevocably bound, had Jeanie ever allowed him to come quite to the point.

There had been one of those friendly dances among an intimate set of very young people, when much can pass as the jest of the moment, though the undercurrent of earnest gives the jest its charm.

Godfrey and Jeanie had waltzed and whirled through more dances than the young lady chose to count, and Godfrey's last sight of her was as she skimmed along the polished floor of the gallery after Minnie Raby, refusing to stop and say good night. She peeped round the corner, and flung a rose right into his face, then vanished into her room and banged the door, while a sound like "To-morrow!" caught his ear. Every one was saying good night and running about. She had just refused him the rose in a cotillion, all was "jest and youthful jollity," but Godfrey felt that "to-morrow" was big with fate. For about the tenth time that evening, he informed himself that he had completely forgotten Constancy.

Before he came downstairs the next day, two letters were brought to him. One was from the young vicar of Waynflete, stating that a thaw having taken place on the Sunday after Christmas, four umbrellas had been put up during service, and did Mr. Waynflete see his

way to a subscription for mending the church roof? The letter was several pages long, and gave a very unflattering picture of the condition of the Waynflete property. The vicar expressed himself with youthful energy, and begged the owner of the property to come and see for himself what had to be done.

And let Godfrey say what he would, he was that owner. The other letter was from Guy, and did not fill half a sheet.

"DEAR GODFREY,

"There is a great deal that must be faced and settled. Pray come home at once, for I must know what you mean to do, and the frost made me so good for nothing that I don't see my way to getting on without help. I am better now, and Staunton is here with me.

"Your affectionate brother,

"GUY WAYNFLETE."

This letter brought Godfrey face to face with his own intentions. If he really meant to present himself before Jeanie's trustees he must know exactly what he had to say to them. There must be no false pretences. He would go back to Ingleby that very day. His decision, when he proclaimed it, roused a chorus of opposition.

"He must come back for the dance on Twelfth Night."

"Oh yes! I mean to come back," said Godfrey, steadily, with a glance at Jeanie. "But I must go home now. I've sent off a telegram to say so."

He got off as soon as he could, and told Jeanie as he wished her good-bye that he was coming back again. But he forgot the rose, and left it in a glass on his dressing-table.

On the next morning, on the last day of the old year, the two brothers found themselves alone and face to face, each determined to say his say; Guy watching his big young brother

with quiet intentness, and Godfrey heeding nothing but his own purpose. He spoke first—

"Guy, I must make you understand once for all that I am not going to act under the will which Aunt Waynflete meant to destroy. I won't profit by it, and it is important to me just now that every one should know that I regard it as a dead letter. I've thought the matter out—the thing must be done legally; I shall execute a deed of gift which will give Waynflete and the money left with it to you and your heirs for ever. And I will have nothing more to do with it. That is one thing."

"And what is the next?" said Guy.

"As to the business, I quite see the difference made by the bad times, and poor returns. I suppose we want more capital. There's young Mat Palmer. If you offered him a partnership, he might put money into the concern, and would do the work as well. As for me, of course any profits that come from my shares

under the first will are fairly mine, as I must bear any loss also. And I don't wish to cut myself out of the concern. But I want to know exactly how I stand, on that footing."

"Well," said Guy, "anything else?"

"Yes; I have practically engaged myself to marry Jeanie Palmer. I made a great mistake last summer in — in — what then passed. That's over, but I must know, of course, exactly what I'm liable for here, before I can honourably speak to old Matthew."

"Anything more?" said Guy again.

"No," said Godfrey, with some dignity. "That's what I had to say."

"And what," said Guy, "do you suppose are the profits of the Waynflete estate which you're going to give me?"

"I suppose it has a value."

"Godfrey," said Guy, suddenly, "I beg your pardon. I did not mean to take this tone at all. But I too have a great deal to say, and it's hard. I—I'm not strong, you know, and

you must be very patient with me while I tell you. And first, I want you to answer me one or two questions."

"Well?" said Godfrey, surprised in his turn.

"What do you consider was the great object of Aunt Margaret's life?"

"To get back Waynflete—to restore the family."

"Is it the same thing?"

"Well, yes, isn't it? She thought so."

"She did. Now, what was *your* object when you made that vow, which I suppose you are now trying to carry out?"

"To get rid of Waynflete, to free my conscience, to do you justice," said Godfrey.

"You mean that you did not want me to suffer because your proceeding made me too late to persuade Aunt Margaret that she had misjudged me?"

"Well, yes."

"Now listen. Please don't speak till I've told you—even if I stop."

Then Guy briefly recapitulated his recent history, beginning with the midnight alarm which Godfrey remembered at Waynflete. He told the awful story in the driest and most matter-of-fact way, showing no trace of the effort which it cost him, while Godfrey listened in utter silence.

"Now," Guy continued, "Staunton will tell you particulars. I thought it right you should know how I'm handicapped. No wonder our ancestors drank or blew their brains out. Whether you think I have a tile loose or no, there's no doubt our family went down through its own wickedness, and Aunt Margaret pulled it up again by pluck and resolution. But the business isn't done, and instead of throwing over Waynflete to me, you ought to do your part of the work she left us."

Godfrey nodded; he was pale, and could not speak. He was perplexed, but he heard the story with instinctive belief.

"She has set us on our legs," Guy went on;

"but the place is a sink of wickedness, and poverty-stricken into the bargain. I have had letters from Clifton, and I know. Now, I've come to see that it's no good saving my own skin, or my own soul either, while that's the case. We have got really to restore Waynflete, but I can't do it alone. If I get too bad, in mind or body, to carry on the business, it would have to be sold, and then *He*—— No, stop. I love the very breath of the air of it! Why, Godfrey, we should be contemptible scoundrels to give in while there's breath in our bodies, or sense in our brains."

Godfrey still sat silent. If Guy was handicapped, how heavily had he handicapped himself! Still, devotion to his brave old aunt's purpose, the inheritance which, after all, was bred in his bone, began to stir within him. He got up and held out his hand.

"I'll help," he said hoarsely.

Guy's hand, all bones and blue veins, met the firm muscular fingers in an equally vigorous clasp.

"That's good!" he said. "We'll do it."

"But, Guy," said Godfrey, after a silence, "you know, if I'd known about it, I never would have left you alone with a ghost—never!"

Guy laughed. "Never mind that now," he said. "Go down to the mill, and get John Henry Cooper to tell you how things are. He's made of just as sound stuff as his father, and is a good deal sharper. We'll pull round. But you must get your hand in. Some one must be able to go about and investigate openings and offers, and I can't at present. As for Jeanie, you'd better let that slide, I should say, for a bit. Old Mat won't be very encouraging, when he knows how it is with us."

Godfrey went to the mill, and heard John Henry Cooper's business statements almost in silence. Then he said—

"I am here now to do what Mr. Guy is not strong enough to manage. He will direct everything."

"Ay, sir, so best; you'll not better Mr. Guy's notions of business requirements; but it's nothing but your place to do your utmost for the business," said Cooper, composedly.

As Godfrey went back to his brother, it struck him how strange it was that the two narratives to which he had just listened should apply to the same person, that the sharp, keen struggle for success in life, and the awful mystical combat with an unknown power, should hang on the same indomitable will.

"Guy," he said, "it's all right. Cooper's going to show me about wool samples to-morrow, and —and—I wish you'd let me black your boots for you!"

"If you like," said Guy, with his odd little smile. "You shall do all the dirty work for me. There's plenty of it in a mill."

CHAPTER II.

"A LITTLE HINT—A MYSTIC FLASH."

Mill House, Ingleby,
December 27th.

"DEAR MISS VYNER,

"I hope you will allow me to thank you for your lovely drawing. It gave me a happy Christmas. The harebells say to me all that you would say yourself. They do indeed help me. Again thanking you, and with every good wish for the New Year,

"I am yours most gratefully,

"GUY WAYNFLETE."

This composition, which had cost Guy much pains, was brought to Florella, as she sat putting delicate finishing touches to her latest picture,

a procession of snails, walking along the top of a moss-grown wall, moist with a recent shower.

"To take the air, and hear the thrushes sing," was the motto written below, and, as Violet Staunton had said, Florella must have got inside a snail's shell and seen the world from between its horns when she painted it. She laid her brush down now, and with throbbing heart held the letter against her cheek. Yes, she had known that he wanted the harebells. She had known it not only because, from one source and another, from Godfrey's letter to Constancy, and from Cuthbert Staunton's reports to his sisters, she knew something of his outward life, but from that curious inward sense that told her when a time of special trial was upon him. The inward vision was dim and faint, the very intensity of her anxiety for him blurred and confused it, and the outward intelligence seemed either to render it superfluous or to show how little it was worth. If she could but "see" more clearly!

That same evening she went to a party with her sister. The "willing game" was played, and there were thought-reading experiments and wonders performed with "Planchette." A lady looked into Florella's eyes as she sat apart, and told her that she would be more successful than any one in the room. She ought to "develop her faculties."

Florella's heart gave a great leap. Could she obtain more power to help him so?

The fear of betraying either his secret or her knowledge of it held her back. That, and an instinct that no stranger should intermeddle with the deep things which filled her with wonder and awe. She refused to try, and saved her delicate spirit from risks unknown. Constancy tried every experiment, and laughed at them all. No influence touched her spirit or shook her nerves. She got hold of "Planchette," and manipulated it so cleverly, guessed so keenly, and invented so boldly that she took in a whole group of not very wise inquirers, who

thought she had developed a surprising power of receptiveness. She laughed and held her peace; but Florella still held apart, and the more she saw, the more she felt that she must guard Guy's experiences from such intrusion. She found that it would have been very easy to betray them.

It was not in this surface region of easy puzzles and useless surprises that her soul touched his.

In two or three days' time she received another note from him, hastily written and much less formal in style.

"It has suddenly come upon me that I have been taking your help without one thought of what it may cost you to give it. Why did I never know before that such help, even to one so innocent as you, must cost pain and effort? Never let that be! Forgive my selfishness; the sympathy you gave me seemed divine. But even Divine help costs suffering,

and I should be the worst of all cowards, the most contemptible of traitors, to let you suffer with me. You have done so much—enough to win for ever the thanks of

"GUY WAYNFLETE."

So then he knew. He knew that, when she fought for him, she too must "feel" the foe. He knew what the strain of self-giving meant. But there was no doubt of the answer. Florella sat down and wrote:—

"DEAR MR. WAYNFLETE,

"I think, if God lets the help go through one, one need not be afraid. I am not good as you think, but I am not afraid. God understands it. I wish I could help more. I am very glad you liked the harebells, and I hope that Mr. Staunton will not let you work too hard in this cold weather.

"Yours truly,

"FLORELLA VYNER."

Poor little inadequate human words! Florella finished and directed her letter, and then she sat down by the fire and cried very much. She was not afraid, but it was almost more than her tender soul could bear. To be good *enough!* To let every bit of selfishness and silliness and idle vanity be burnt away by the spiritual fire! To think largely enough of so large a thing!

More outside news came through the medium of Christmas letters from the various Palmer cousins. The attraction that had kept Godfrey at Kirkton Hall was freely commented on, and it need hardly be said that it was well to the front in Constancy's mind when, on paying a New Year's call on the Stauntons with her aunt and sister, she beheld a tall flaxen head in dangerous proximity to the chandelier, and recognized it as Godfrey Waynflete's.

"I have come up on business about the mill while Staunton is still able to be with my brother," he said, after the stiffest of greetings.

"I am very glad to see you," said Mrs. Palmer, cordially. "Do you know I want to ask a question? Are you going to let Waynflete again for the summer and autumn? No air ever suited me so well, and as for the noises, one gets used to them. I found the old horseman at last quite companionable."

Suddenly Constancy broke in, in clear, deliberate tones.

"If you think of going to Waynflete, Aunt Con, I think I'll make a confession. It entered into my wicked head, when we stayed at Waynflete before, to try the effect on my family of supernatural terrors. I did most of the ghosts that people heard in the house. It's very easy to take people in. And as I shall probably be in the Tyrol next summer, I dare say there won't be any mysterious noises."

"Constancy, can I believe you?" exclaimed Mrs. Palmer.

Godfrey came and stood in front of her, towering over her chair.

"I must ask you to tell me exactly what you did?" he said sternly.

"Nothing much," interposed Florella. "I told Mr. Waynflete about it last summer."

"Guy knows?"

"Yes; he knows it was nothing of consequence. But of course it was very foolish of us."

"And very amusing," said Constancy, defiantly.

"I hope the inhabitants of Waynflete were frightened enough to afford you amusement. In that case, no doubt, it was worth while."

"Oh, amusement is always worth while. I heard you had a most amusing Christmas at Kirkton. And you go back soon, I believe?"

"I should have gone back, Miss Vyner, if my brother had not been too ill to spare me. I have explained to my Rilston friends that I am tied to Ingleby for the present."

Here the Stauntons and Florella struck up the swords of the combatants by a rush of

questions as to their Yorkshire acquaintances, while Constancy could have bitten out her tongue as she recalled the commonplace feminine spite of her retort on Godfrey.

"Worse than any Miss Bennet!" she thought, as the discussions of last summer came back on her memory, and she knew that her sudden confession had been prompted by the determination to make him notice her at any cost.

"So, Florella," she said, when the sisters were at home and alone together, "you needn't have been so angry with me for that bit of frivol last autumn. You see he has neither broken his heart nor gone to the ends of the earth, and given up Waynflete to Guy. He has got engaged to Jeanie—and her money."

"You heard him say that his brother wanted him," said Florella, after a moment. "How could he go away?"

"Poor Guy!" said Cosy. "He is a nice fellow. I hope he won't die of his heart complaint! But Flo, speak out! What would

you have done if you had had such a letter? I couldn't tell him I liked him—when—when I didn't mean to."

"I think you do," said Florella, "whether you mean to or not. But you might have helped the best side of him to make amends for what he had done. You left him all to himself."

"Well," said Cosy, after a half-offended pause, "if I *am* a fool, at least I have the sense to know it."

She threw herself into a chair by the fire, and sat staring into the blaze with her chin on her hands. She, brilliant, admired, successful, had done a small and a stupid thing, and her pride was stung by the knowledge. The sleeping soul began to stir within her. Life had been to her like the music described by hearsay—a sound without a tune. Her clever mind had dealt with words and signs, while the undeveloped and childish spirit had never realised their meaning. If Godfrey, as she

had sometimes called him, had been "only a great boy," poor Cosy herself was still but a great girl, and a selfish girl too, shrinking from the disturbance of passionate emotion.

In such a form she experienced the "conviction of sin," and the change in her mental outlook was so great that it might well be called a conversion, as conversions come to such as she.

She got the thought of her own shortcoming quite clear in her mind, as clear as if it had been a mathematical problem, or the plot of a story. Then she got up, shook herself together, and went to get ready to recite at a "slum concert" patronized by some of her friends.

CHAPTER III.

ST. MICHAEL.

GODFREY'S brief glimpse of Constancy had sent his "forgetfulness" to the winds. He had written a very proper letter to Jeanie's trustee uncle, telling him, in confidence, the exact state of the Ingleby affairs, owning that he had made advances which just now were difficult to follow up, but by which he should consider himself bound in future. And he further made it quite plain that he considered himself only master of Waynflete Hall *de facto,* and not *de jure.* The answer was also a very carefully considered composition, and was more encouraging than it probably would have been, if Guy's health had been considered less precarious. A year

was skilfully indicated as the time that it might take Godfrey to "see his way." Of course there was to be no engagement; still, at the end of a year, if not before, they would like to hear how Mr. Godfrey was getting on.

"It'll take a deal of bad management to upset Palmer Brothers," said old Mr. Matthew; "and like enough it'll all come to Godfrey."

By this arrangement Godfrey had to abide. He had tied a clog round his neck, and it was heavy to carry. He set himself with dogged resolution to master the details of business, and in the long evenings the two brothers looked over their aunt's letters and papers, together with the relics handed over to the Stauntons by old Miss Maxwell, and which Cuthbert had given to Guy.

Godfrey, who had been at first reluctant, grew more and more interested in what he found, and Guy abstained entirely from comment on any of the facts brought to light, though these explained many things to him.

He saw that his aunt had had good reason for her anger and alarm, when she had seen the brandy-bottle in his cupboard, for there were bitter letters of reproach and warning, the sort of letters that start up indeed like spectres from the other side of the grave, and in one, addressed to his father, there was an indication that his own enemy had been at work, for it consisted of a sharp and angry rebuke to the unsatisfactory nephew for "excusing his own faults by untruths and fancies like others before him." Margaret's own letter had evidently come back into her hands, but the corresponding one had been destroyed.

They found a few little relics of their mother and grandmother, who had belonged to the same family, small North-country gentry. They had been almost the last of their race, and there were no near cousins left. The lads had to make the most of a few bits of needlework, a stiff little note or two, and a photograph of their mother, of so much weaker a type that

it had left but little impress on their strong Waynflete features. There were old likenesses, too, of father and grandfather, at which Guy looked earnestly, and then cast a stealthy glance across the room.

"The same old face," he said, under his breath; while the hand that held the photograph shook a little.

They also pieced out the family history during its period of eclipse, realising with something of a shock, at least to Godfrey, how entirely it had sunk to the working-farmer level. They learned to know "the rock from which they were hewn," and their sense of their old great-aunt's energy and courage increased accordingly. Godfrey had escaped these more degrading temptations, and Guy, perhaps, was *quitte pour la peur.*

Godfrey went over to Waynflete, more willingly after these discoveries, to see what could be done for it, but came back late in the evening in very low spirits.

He hated the place, he said; the vicar had walked him about, and so had the bailiff. The church was tumbling down, and the farms were just worthless.

"I never saw such a God-forsaken hole," he said. "I declare, as I came over that rickety old bridge, through that crooked old plantation, and those miserable weedy fields, pasture that wouldn't feed a donkey, and beastly old hay so rotten that nobody had ever thought it worth leading, I—I wished Aunt Waynflete had let it alone. I never noticed it much in the summer. I didn't notice anything much then, and I suppose it's pretty; but it took all the heart out of me."

"I dare say it did," said Guy.

"I believe there's a fate against it's coming to good."

"What if there is?" said Guy, sharply. "Where should we be if Aunt Margaret had stopped to think about fate?"

Godfrey leant over the fire with his elbows on his knees.

"I don't see that she did get the better of fate, after all. Waynflete's a beastly hole, and there's no money to keep it up, and it's touch and go with the business, and you have half killed yourself."

"But not quite," said Guy. "Now, look here, it's disgraceful to own a place in this condition, and it's got to be pulled round, spite of fate or fiend either. Of course the work is not done, when the place is a sink of iniquity, and the property gone to destruction. We've got to finish it. Come, cheer up; get some supper. I've got a notion. We'll get Clifton to come here, to dine and sleep, and talk matters over. Don't you play devil's advocate. He doesn't want one."

Godfrey looked up, half-scared, half-fascinated, into his brother's face. There were times when he was more than half afraid of him.

Mr. Clifton, a lively and energetic young

man, full of plans and schemes, for which he found Waynflete hardly ripe, came over as invited, and soon suggested starting a subscription for the repairs of the church.

"The curious old Norman architecture makes it a county concern," he said, "and Mrs. Waynflete's memory is so much respected that I am sure people would like to show it by helping us."

"Yes," said Guy, "I expect Mrs. John Palmer, our connection, who wishes to take the house for the summer, would give us something."

Mr. Clifton looked much cheered by the notion of a tenant in the shape of a well-to-do lady.

"We might get a good deal done by Michaelmas," he said. "I find the church is dedicated to St. Michael."

"Is that so?" said Guy, as if struck.

"Yes; I've been looking up the records—and—I believe it's illegal; but I found some such curious matters in the old registers, that,

as they concern your family, I ventured to bring them with me."

He produced two worm-eaten old volumes, in which he had placed various marks.

It appeared that the last Waynflete parson had lived to extreme old age. His death in 1810 was set down, and had been followed by three long incumbencies of men of the illiterate and not over-reputable class, too common formerly in the north of England.

"The last was more decent," said the vicar; "but he did nothing. The roots of evil are old and deep. Now, here's a queer thing, noted comparatively recently by the vicar before last, in 1864.

"Buried *John Outhwaite.* Stated on his death-bed that, when a lad, he saw the ghost of one of the old Waynfletes, on Flete Bridge, on an autumn night. Probably a trick played on him by a comrade."

"Is there any more?" said Guy, eagerly.

"The ghost of 't' owd Guy' is a tradition in

the place," said the vicar; "but there seems nothing recent at all authenticated."

Next he showed them the entry of the death of the last squire, and of the luckless Guy, with *Died by His own Hand*, and *Died in Delirium*, written in crabbed, ill-spelt characters by the parson-brother, and then—

"It is not to be credited that my Unlucky Nephew saw His Ancestor's Spirit. That is the same Idle Tale as was told by Peter Outhwaite when he came home from Rilston Market, and drowned his horse in the Flete. Albeit, there is Waynflete blood in the Outhwaites, for my Grandfather and his brother were Wild Youths. We be more Prudent now."

"Ha!" said Guy, drawing a long breath. "I could not understand how these Outhwaites could see him. That soft lad is an Outhwaite, isn't he? Is he the last of them?"

"Yes, except his old mother. She is a character, and very proud of her family. Her contempt for me is considerable. But poor Jem

is an institution, and believes himself a pillar of the church. He is a good fellow in his way."

"You spoke of enlarging the churchyard," said Guy, suddenly, "if we—if my brother gave the ground. Couldn't the wall come down, and the last squire's grave be included? He could be forgiven now, couldn't he?"

"Surely," said the vicar. "If the ground were given, it could be done easily."

"Of course," said Godfrey, briefly. "What else ought we to do?"

Then the vicar unfolded his cherished scheme. The lease was just out of the Dragon, "that rowdy little public in Flete Dale, a curse to the place in every way, and the centre of mischief." If Mr. Waynflete would refuse to renew the lease—that was the place he should like for club, coffee-tavern, everything; several rooms—one large—the lads, unluckily, used to going there. "We should turn the devil's flank on his own ground."

As the young clergyman expounded the details of the newest and most up-to-date recipe for social, moral, and religious improvement, Guy moved the hand with which—it was a trick he had—he was shading his eyes, and looked him full in the face with such a gaze as brought him suddenly to a dead stop, a look of awe, inspiration, and resolute daring beyond description.

"That's right. That shall be done!" he said. "That *will* turn the devil's flank!"

Mr. Clifton believed quite orthodoxly in the devil; but he had used his name at the moment more or less metaphorically. He felt as he looked at Guy, as he had never felt before, that "improving" his parish meant literally dragging it away from the power of evil.

"The place won't answer in that depressing hole," said Godfrey. "It gives one the shivers to think of it."

"It'll answer, if we're not afraid," said Guy.

It was not surprising, on any grounds, that

he had a bad fit of palpitation and faintness that night, after the long discussion was over.

"I must lie still," he said in the morning; "but bring Clifton here before he goes. I want to speak to him."

"I am afraid I over-tired you last night," said the vicar, penitently, when he obeyed this summons.

Guy was lying back on his pillows, with the winter morning sun shining through his unshaded window, full on his hair and face.

"Thanks—it couldn't possibly be helped," he said. "It doesn't matter. You're quite right about the Dragon. Don't give the notion up. You know we have neither of us much money, but we'll help. And you're right about the subscription. Every one that lends a hand brings more force to help."

"We must give a long pull and a strong pull and a pull all together," said the vicar, cheerily.

"Yes," said Guy, with a vivid smile. "Now I understand that. And when we have won,

you could paint in Michael above the Dragon, beating him down under his feet."

"Surely, most appropriate in St. Michael's parish. Oh, I felt very much out of heart before; but you have greatly encouraged me, and I hope and pray that we may make some way now."

"Pray?" said Guy. "Yes. That's a very hard thing to do; but it makes a great difference."

And the young vicar, as he looked into Guy's eyes, felt for the first time that he understood what was meant by "*wrestling* in prayer." He was so much impressed that he could make no sort of obvious and natural answer. He was silent for a moment, and then said—

"You will tell me every idea that occurs to you? I shall be too grateful. And—when you are strong enough—if the Hall is occupied, or uninhabitable, do come to the Vicarage. I've made that weather-tight, and—you could see everything for yourself."

"Thanks," said Guy; "I think I could do that—I will, sometime. And Godfrey will be coming over about the repairs."

To Godfrey it was a distinct relief when Guy called him after the visitor was gone, and dictated the letter to be written to the agent of the Australian sheep-farmers, who supplied the mill with raw wool, and who had not supplied it in the past, according to the samples offered. Palmer Brothers did not intend to be cheated in the future.

Then Guy was left alone in the wintry sunshine to think over the past night.

"The Enemy"—as he phrased it—had indeed come to him as before; but he had not been afraid, for, in the same inward region of unspeakable experience, he had felt for the first time, the presence of a Friend.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAMILY FACE.

MRS. JOHN PALMER replied by a handsome subscription to the letter informing her of the condition of Waynflete church. "Miss S. J. Palmer" sent fifty pounds as a tribute to her dear aunt's memory, from the Riviera, where she had gone with her mother; and others of the family and neighbours came forward liberally enough to put Mr. Clifton in very high spirits. Miss Florella Vyner offered a modest five pounds, and, finally, Constancy sent fifteen, being the entire fruit of the story that had come into being at Moorhead. She sent it to Guy, and stated that it was a token of affection for dear Mrs. Waynflete;

but it was, perhaps, something of a sin-offering as well.

Godfrey beheld her contribution with strange thrills. He was pleased, and yet life was harder after he had read, and secreted her little note, on the loss of which Guy did not comment.

Life could not be very easy. Apart from his own troubles, there was a strain in living with any one in such a state of nervous tension as Guy, carefully as the elder brother controlled himself. His very reticence began to have an effect on Godfrey, and though he himself felt more and more the blessing of comparative inward peace, he could not but suffer much from the outward trial, and once his carefully maintained caution gave way, and he made a great mistake.

"Look here," he said one morning in the early spring, as he studied his letters, "I asked Clifton to get this done for me."

"What?" said Godfrey, looking. "A photo-

graph? Oh, that picture. What did you want it for?"

"You don't mind? I wanted really to see it."

"It's not much like you now," said Godfrey.

Guy got up, and, unlocking a drawer, he laid a row of small objects on the table, setting the photograph of the Waynflete picture beside them.

These were the old likenesses of their father and grandfather, a handsome, well-set-up photograph of himself taken at Oxford, and another more recent one.

"Oh, I say," said Godfrey, "why did you sit when you were looking so ill? Yes, there's a good deal of likeness; but, oh, chuck this one with the eyes into the fire—I don't like it. Eh! What's this? Have you been drawing yourself? You have made yourself look quite fiendish."

Guy had laid a rough pen-and-ink outline beside the line of photographs. They certainly

formed a curious study of a persistent type, but the last photograph of the living Guy seemed to blot the others out, the mournful eyes were so full of terrible suggestion, the mocking lips were set into lines of so much stronger purpose. And the drawing repeated the photograph with a difference.

"What?" said Godfrey, as Guy's silence suddenly suggested an idea to him. What? Do you mean that—the ghost—your bogie—looks like that?"

"Yes," said Guy, "I think so."

Godfrey swept the pictures together with an angry motion. He had believed in the ghost, but somehow this definite presentment struck a sudden scepticism into him.

"Oh, come," he said, "nonsense! You never ought to look at them. It's very bad for you. You may get to fancy anything."

Guy gave him an odd look of comprehension.

"Never mind," he said quietly, "I ought not to have brought them out. They won't hurt

me. Here's quite another matter. You've managed those Devonshire dyers very well. They're coming round to our terms. See."

In the gentle steady look with which Guy spoke these encouraging words, the likeness to these wild versions of the family face was lost; but Godfrey had received a shock. In the instinctive recoil of his being from the incredible horror, he doubted Guy's sanity, even his truth; he shrank from him, even while he loyally obeyed him, and did all he knew for his comfort. And yet as the slow days wore on, in close contact with his brother, an awful sense of comprehension began to steal into him. He too was a son of the Waynfletes; he too had been tempted, was tempted hourly to give up the hateful drudgery, to shake off the fate to which he was bound. He began to understand Guy. And though Guy controlled not only his face and words, but his very thoughts, before Godfrey, the mischief was done. Guy's very presence filled him with weird suggestions.

It struck him that *that other figure must be there too,* and the longing for escape became almost irresistible, a longing much intensified when he received the following letter from Mrs. Joshua Palmer, one Saturday, by the second post—

"Jeanie enjoys the new places and the amusements of hotel life, and I may say, without a mother's vanity, that she is greatly admired; but I think she loves her old friends, and has enjoyed nothing so much as her Christmas at Raby. We are most glad to hear that the Ingleby business is prosperous, and that Guy is stronger, and we look forward to seeing you on our return from abroad, my dear Godfrey, with great pleasure. Jeanie hears from a Rilston friend, who has a cousin at Constancy Vyner's college, that there is a very learned professor there who admires her very much, and that when she has taken her degree they will be married, a very suitable arrangement; but I am an old-fashioned, ignorant

person, and I don't think that these new studies teach girls how to make home happy, and I am glad dear Jeanie has simpler tastes."

Godfrey flung the letter down, and tore open another. It was from a college friend in Queensland, and gave a lively picture of the life of a sheep-farmer.

"Come out and join me," it said; "let your brother manage the business. He can buy our wool, and we'll make a good thing of it."

If he could but go, and escape from his misery! He looked up and started violently as he saw Guy standing beside him, watching him with his intent, searching look.

"I've been having a turn with Rawdie," he said, and sat down by the fire, still looking at Godfrey, under his hand.

There was a short silence, and then suddenly, without warning, Godfrey burst out.

"I see no good in all this work, nor in anything else. I believe there *is* a curse upon us. We'd better cut each other's throats."

"That's what I want to talk about," said Guy; "not about cutting throats, but because I know you're in a bad way. I've been thinking a great deal about you. What's the matter?"

Then Godfrey showed his two letters, and in confused words, helped out by Guy's questions, he told that he loved Constancy to distraction, that she had failed him in his hour of need, that Jeanie was his inevitable fate, and, finally, that he wanted to run away. He hated Waynflete—no, not only because of the way he had got it, but because—well, there was something—Waynflete took the heart out of him. Guy leant forward and looked hard into his brother's face.

"We have got to go down to the bottom of it together," he said. "It won't do to be afraid of one's thoughts. There are no other ghosts so fatal. And as for cutting one's throat, no doubt it's simple, but how about when it's done?"

"Guy," said Godfrey, hurriedly, "do you—do you really see that Thing—you showed me?"

"Yes," said Guy, gently; "but that has nothing at all to do with you. That is only a nervous affection, wholly physical. It has no existence whatever for you."

"But you said you had seen the ghost?"

"I believe," said Guy, choosing his words carefully, "that I have gone through experiences, not new in our family, and to which our constitutions make us liable. It's an unusual kind of thing, but there are other cases on record. As to what agency causes these delusions and visions—I use both words advisedly—I am not prepared to say. As to the Waynflete traditions, it is my belief that there is some connection between these experiences and the place where they occur, and the people to whom they happen, somehow, where nerves and Spirit and the hidden forces of Nature meet. I know no more, and I don't think they'll fall to your share."

The definite words, the composed manner steadied Godfrey's spirit. He had felt the brush of the unseen wings, and he was able to recognize what Guy meant.

"There is something more," said Guy. "It is under these forms of experience that *I* have had to resist temptation. Temptation is common to man, but some of us are made so as to *know* when it tears soul and spirit—yes, and body, asunder. But it's just as hard, no doubt, for other people to keep their heads above water as for me. But," he paused and hesitated; then went on in still quieter tones, "whatever men, in all ages and all places, have meant by spiritual experience, what they meant when they said that they were 'tempted of the devil,' that I have known, and I know. And I know, also, what they meant when they said that the Lord had delivered them out of his hands. And I thank God for the knowledge, even if it came by fire! Remember that! But as for you, the devil, or what he

stands for, would give you just as much trouble in Queensland as here. You're not married to Jeanie yet, nor even engaged to her. And you promised not to leave me alone with the ghosts."

Guy's manner was so reticent and calm that Godfrey hardly grasped at once all the force of what he had said. He leant his head on his hands, and was silent for some minutes. Then he said, not very steadily—

"If I left you now, I should be a deserter. But I nearly did. And you know what I did do—as to you—and what a fool I was at Christmas. Some day I shall knock under."

"No, you won't," said Guy; "you'll stick to your colours. You'll stand by me."

Godfrey nodded; he still sat with hidden face. Guy laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Poor old lad!" he said. "I'd rather fight seven devils, more wicked than the first, than have my angel fail me! But, Godfrey, stick to this. Never mind *what* the fate or the curse

may be. We have to fight it, and, God helping us, we *can.* And I've no reason to suppose that the fight would be over, even if we had cut our throats, and been—gathered to our fathers. If it were, it would be a dirty trick to turn tail and leave the fiends—or the bailiffs—in possession at Waynflete."

Poor Godfrey looked hardly reassured by this suggestive speech; but suddenly Guy's face softened, and he said, pleadingly—

"Don't make me into a bugbear, old boy; it's rather hard, and there's really no occasion."

"I should be a confounded fool if I did," said Godfrey, with some embarrassment. "No, I'll not turn tail. I'll stick to the shop."

He kept his promise manfully; but it was a relief to both brothers when Easter week brought Cuthbert Staunton for a flying visit. He was going abroad, he said, to look up materials for a set of lectures on the sources of English culture. He had set his heart on getting Guy to come with him.

"We'll take it easy," he said; "and drop all the bogies in the Channel as we go."

"Paradise wouldn't be in it," said Guy, with a long breath. "But no; first I must go to Waynflete."

"I don't approve of that move."

"I'm much better, and I mean to go."

"That's always conclusive."

"Well, I know best. But by-and-by—Poor Godfrey frames very well to the business. Perhaps he would be better without me. I say, is Constancy Vyner really going to marry a learned professor?"

"Not that I know of. She is going abroad with my sisters, as soon as the term is over. She is not coming to Waynflete, and that, perhaps, is best."

"Well, I don't know. I think the heavens will have to fall some time."

"Florella Vyner has a sweet little drawing, which she means for the Academy. 'Above the Stars'—a ditch full of wide-open celandines."

"Does she come to Waynflete?"

"I believe so—to study primroses," said Cuthbert, sedately.

Guy pulled Rawdie's ears, and said nothing; but Cuthbert ceased to oppose his intention of accepting Mr. Clifton's invitation, and looking after the improvements for himself.

CHAPTER V.

T' OWD GEN'LEMAN.

Guy went to Waynflete. The sweet, clear atmosphere, fresh from the moors, delighted him, and he felt daily stronger and better, while his inborn love for the home of his fathers withstood all painful associations. On his little rough pony, with Rawdie beside him he appeared suddenly in the fields and lanes, like "t' owd Guy hissel," as Jem Outhwaite's old mother declared.

"Eh! but we've got a master!" one old man said, quite unimpressed by Guy's careful quoting of his brother's name, as he gave orders about repairs and improvements, and made himself acquainted with every dilapida-

tion. He bearded old Cowperthwaite, the publican of the Dragon, in his den, resisted the telling plea that Cowperthwaites had kept the Dragon before Waynfletes lost the Hall, and refused him the renewal of his lease at Michaelmas on the ground of disorder and disreputableness, and of various poaching scandals, which he hunted up as diligently as if old Margaret had bought back Waynflete for the single purpose of preserving its game. It was a proceeding calculated to bring a hornet's nest about Godfrey's ears; but Guy was as determined as if no other spot in the valley would have served for a village club. His aims were so visionary, and his methods of carrying them out so practical, that the vicar felt as if two men were working beside him. Guy knew nothing of the parochial side of a country squire's life; but he hunted down the old Dragon, as if turning a public-house into a coffee-tavern was his life work.

One glorious morning of spring and promise,

as he was riding in and out of the lanes in the valley, his pony cast a shoe. He took him into the forge, which was close to the Dragon, to have him re-shod, and, while he waited, strolled on by the side of the dancing, laughing beck towards the old foot-bridge. In this blue and sunny air, when the once weird and desolate wood was beginning to swell with living green, when the birds were singing, and the earth was full of life, he felt able to look again on the scene of his trial.

He saw the rocky field down which he had stumbled in weary haste, now fresh and green, with a dozen or so of little black-faced lambs skipping about on it. The sunlight shot through and through the opposite wood, now bright and delicate with primroses and anemones; the sky was of cold, but radiant blue. Rawdie pricked his long black ears, and watched the lambs with deep interest, but with admirable self-restraint.

Guy sat down on a bit of broken wall at

the foot of the field, and looked across the river. The haunted hollow was lovely with all the rough charm of the north; for Guy it had the charm of home.

"New heavens and a new earth!" he thought.

"Good day t' ye, Mr. Waynflete!"

He turned with a start, and saw a tall old woman, with a red shawl over her head and a handsome, weather-beaten face.

"Good day," he said. "Mrs. Outhwaite, isn't it?"

"Ay, sir. Marg'ret Outhwaite's my name. My old man and I were cousins—I'm as good as the last of 'em. Ye'll ha' heard, sir, maybe, that the Outhwaites ha' the reet to see t' owd Guy—*him as walks*—as John Outhwaite, my husband, could have told ye."

"Ay!" said Guy. "So I've heard. Won't you sit down, and tell me about it?"

"Nay, I'll stand. But sit ye down, sir; ye look but poorly. Ay? Ye'll maybe have had

a *warstle* wi' him yersell. Eh—ay? John saw him, here on t' brig. He held to it—at his death, and said 'twas a warning. Eh dear—he never took it!"

"Did you ever see him yourself?" asked Guy.

"Nay—I never saw un; the Lord's left un no room. Eh, sir, have ye got religion?"

"Not quite," said Guy.

"Eh, sir, ye mun get it; ye're the sort to need it."

"I do," said Guy; "that's so."

"Sithee," said the old woman, resting the basket she carried on the wall, and dropping the tone of honest pride with which she had spoken of her family's share in the Waynflete ghost, for a coaxing whisper, "sithee, Mr. Waynflete. There's my lad; he's a bit soft is Jemmy; but he can do a job of work; he can use a besom wi' the best, and he've fettled up t' kirk for t' oud sexton, and pu'd t' bell and

fetched t' watter for t' christenings, these twenty year. But this 'ere vicar he's a stranger. Now, Mr. Waynflete, canna' ye speak a word for my lad, t' last Outhwaite as Waynflete'll ever see. T' vicar, he knows nought o' Waynflete, and 'twas from the Glory Hallelujah men I got salvation. But 'tis all the same, sithee, t' kirk's never opened without my Jem, and I doubt na the Lord speaks to his saul. Eh, here a be; I've been a looking for him. He's feared to cross t' brig by 'issell. There's no telling, there's no telling, sir, what t' owd Guy may have done to him."

Jem, still with the weird boyishness that often clings to those of imperfect intellect, came shambling down the path from the Dragon.

"T' pony's shod," he said, in a high, cracked voice, as he came in sight.

"Thanks," said Guy, moving. "Good day to you, Mrs. Outhwaite; I'll see the vicar."

The sunny valley had lost its smile, and

for the moment Guy yielded to his sudden sense of shrinking distaste, and hurried on without a backward glance. This burlesque of his most inward and individual experience gave him a new sensation. He took his pony, and rode on up the hill to the church, where the vicar was watching the placing of the new grey slabs of stone, in place of the broken ones on the high-pitched roof. Guy tied up his pony, and sitting down on a flat tombstone, looked on also.

"Peter cast a shoe," he said; "and Mrs. Outhwaite has been pleading for Jem's place as second grave-digger."

"Oh, of course, one must let him literally 'fool around' as long as he can. His mother is pretty much of a Ranter; but so is every one here with any religion. How else would they have got it? She watches over poor Jemmy. Now and then he gets drunk at the Dragon. It'll be a good day for him when we close it. He's a nervous, timid creature; I've

seen him shiver and shake sometimes in a way that was pitiful."

"The mother says t' owd Guy scared him."

"Oh, well," said the vicar, "I believe that tradition would have died out long ago but for old Peggy Outhwaite. She takes a pride in it. 'T' owd Guy' is used as a sort of bogie to frighten the children; I've heard a mother say, 'T' owd Guy'll get ye.' It's a sort of proverb."

Guy made no answer; but he reflected that Mr. Clifton was a South-country stranger, to whom the natives did not confide their inmost beliefs, and, being himself a North-country man, and no stranger, he enjoyed this opinion in silence. He started a little when he turned and saw the subject of the conversation standing close by him, touching his cap, and smiling at him, a slow, foolish smile.

"So you're come to look after the church?" said Guy.

"When t' church is fettled oop, me and

sexton'll have new clothes," he said, in a cracked but confidential whisper.

"That'll be fine," said Guy, good-naturedly.

Jem grinned, nodded, and shambled off again; but, from that day forward, he attached himself to Guy with curious persistency, watching for his coming, starting up unexpectedly to hold the pony, made happy by a word or smile. He followed Guy as closely, and more humbly than Rawdie.

So it came to pass that, on the morning after her arrival with her aunt at the Hall, Florella, having found her way into part of the wood that covered Flete Edge, heard a sharp bark, and beheld Rawdie come scurrying over last year's leaves and this year's primroses, till a shrill whistle stopped him short.

Florella stood still also, as, coming across a clearing in the underwood, she saw Guy riding his little rough pony, and behind him, like a shadow, the grotesque figure of Jem Outhwaithe.

They were a strange and unusual pair, with the grotesque little dog for a herald.

Guy sprang off the pony, and came forward with an eager greeting.

"We knew you were coming yesterday," he said. "Clifton and I meant to call this afternoon. I am so glad I am still here. Oh yes," as she murmured an inquiry and a greeting, "I am quite strong now."

After a few more sentences, he paused and said, with a smile, and a little shyness, "I want to show you something."

He led her a few steps aside, along a little foot-track towards a bank, covered all over with the long trails and open flowers of the smaller periwinkle.

"There!" he said. "I have been watching these every day, to see if they would be ready for you. The spring blue-bells won't be here for a long time; but these—they are blue—they are like stars—won't they make a picture?"

"They are just what I wanted to see," she

said. "I have hardly ever been in the country in spring."

"Let me get you some to take home and learn them. When I look at flowers, I almost think of how you will see them, and then I know how pretty they are."

He put the long sprays into her hand, and they looked into one another's eyes, and felt nothing but the spring, the flowers, and each other's presence.

At first Guy wished for no more. He did not try to draw Florella more closely into his inner life, she made the outer one so fair. It was delightful to see her cut cake and pour out tea, to hear her chat to her aunt, or play with Rawdie, and when, at Mr. Clifton's suggestion, she undertook some little kindnesses to a few old women, a little notice of some rough girls, when she put her hand to the help of Waynflete, it seemed to Guy in truth like the descent of an angel.

A sweet and natural magic drowned the dark

hues of his soul in rainbow tints. From the moment when he knew himself to love her, his inward appeal to her paused. So far as he knew, he had been to her but a soul in distress, and now he had a foolish, pathetic impulse to come to her in sunshine and flowers, to please her fancy, not to move her pity. So surely, he might touch her heart, just touch it—one day he might perhaps win it outright.

And she? She never "saw" his thoughts now; how could she, when the sight of his face blotted them out? She did not even get on very fast with painting his periwinkles. One little word about his trouble would have been sweeter to her than the bluest of blue flowers; the very word he was so careful not to speak.

For his blissful content did not last very long. Surface intercourse, however sweet, could not long be sufficient for him. He could not come to her as any other wooer might have done, and, if he could, he would not. He never swerved from his conviction, that until he was free from

every trace of his strange bondage, he must never seek to take her to himself. "Why, Godfrey had not been able to stand the knowledge of his secret, should he inflict it upon her?" So he was distant and reserved, and gave her pain far worse than any that his confidence could have cost her.

But he himself was full of eager hope; and hope, doubtful of fulfilment, though a very good thing in its way, is something of a foe to patience.

CHAPTER VI.

HOPES AND FEARS.

But Art is impersonal. Downy palms and snown blackthorn may be offered to an artist as subjects for a sketch, just as well as if they would not also serve as tokens of love and hope. As Guy, one sunny morning, followed the path that all through Flete Dale led along by the riverside, he suffered no bud or blossom that indicated the coming of his tardy northern spring to escape him. As he gathered and combined them, it struck him that the glory of them was in the relief of their delicate tints and airy forms in the cold spring sunshine, against the pale spring sky, and that the thing would be to show them to Florella where they grew.

And, turning round a great tangle of rosy stems and shining brown buds, he saw her in the brown dress that had a sort of woodland tinting, and suited her, he thought, as well as harebell blue. She was listening to a tall, strong-limbed girl, with the handsome features and wind-blown complexion of the district, picturesquely set off by the yellow handkerchief which she wore on her head, listening with a troubled face. Her companion's face was quite impassive, though there was a melancholy tone in her voice, as at sight of Guy, she turned off with a "Good day t'ye, sir."

"Is that one of the girls you have been making friends with?" he said, after he had offered his spring buds to Florella, and she had taken them smiling, but still with wistful eyes.

"Yes. But I feel so ignorant and stupid with them. It is difficult quite to understand."

It was still more difficult, it was impossible to keep on the surface of things, when these

two were together. But perhaps the inhabitants of Waynflete might be treated as an abstract subject, like the spring flowers. Rawdie thought that the discussion of their needs might occupy some time, and went off to investigate water-rats and other objects of interest.

"They talk to you, of course," said Guy. "But no other stranger would get a word out of our folks."

"They don't talk much," she answered. "But, one seems half to find out—and then one comes across such real troubles, and temptations. It seems so hard."

"But, Clifton shouldn't!" exclaimed Guy, with a sudden change. "There are very few people here fit for *you* to have anything to do with."

"Oh, not that," said Florella. "But, you see, I haven't known much of any one but girls of my own sort. A friend of mine looks after a girl's club in London, and some of us go to

teach French and drawing there, or to sing. She thinks every one ought to spread whatever good things they may have. But it isn't French and drawing that these girls want!"

"Do tell me just what you mean?" he said entreatingly, as they walked slowly on by the riverside.

"I mean," she said, with a glow at thus taking counsel with him, which he little guessed, "that girls like me, tell each other their troubles, and we try to help each other, and sometimes we can. But one finds out much worse sorrows and trials than we ever have."

"That is what you ought to have nothing to do with!" exclaimed Guy, imperatively.

"But," she said, "you can't help people just by being sorry for them in a general way. You have got to *feel* in *yourself* just what they feel. So one must try to understand them."

Guy was silent. He could not keep his

angel to himself. The more divine was the help she gave him, the more freely it must flow. He felt responsible for the welfare of Waynflete; he knew that he did not fight his battle for himself alone; but she had no obligations but the impulse to give herself in helpful love. She touched the flowers in her hand, and, with a sudden smile, said—

"You know, one has to 'see.'"

"Yes," he said, gravely. "Well! So the world was saved!"

She had given him the thought; but to herself it was new. She could not speak; while Guy felt for the moment as if the power to understand her had been cheaply bought by all the agony of his own experience.

They were brought suddenly back to earth again, to the spring flowers and the sunlight, and to the squalid cottages across the field, by wild and frantic barks from Rawdie, who rushed into view, wet and muddy, with a large rat in his mouth, while Jem Outhwaite, climbing

up the bank behind him, cried out triumphantly, "He've got 'im, sir; he've got 'im hissel'!"

Rawdie went home in a state of absolute self-satisfaction. For Guy, it had been a moment for which to live; but, such are the conditions of this poor mortal life, that it was followed by a great reaction, by passionate longings to take this beloved maiden to himself, by the old disgust at all that was abnormal in his fate. He soon went back to Ingleby, where he puzzled Godfrey by fitful spirits, intermittent efforts to seem more like other people, and by hours of gloom and silence. The mental fever quieted down after a time, or perhaps he learnt to endure it.

But Florella was happier for the moment of approach. They had not ceased to understand each other. She could not paint the sun on the spring flowers, she could not satisfy herself with any tint with which she tried to match them. But, if light and hue escaped

her, she could seize on their form, and she made delicate and exquisite pen-and-ink sketches of every swelling leaf and bursting bud.

She went, also, and stood on the bridge which she had seen in vision on that murky autumn evening, when her soul had followed Guy's through its strange encounter. She looked at the laughing, living water, sparkling in the spring sunshine, and at the woods, now fresh and green. It was the fairest spot that ever was cursed by haunting memories. And yet, in the midst of all its sweetness, she felt conscious of something that she did not see, that eluded any insight that she might possess. And she did make some friends, and took into her heart some troubles, and learnt to love the weird and lovely place, because Guy loved it so much. She did not regret the London season which she was missing; she would not go and stay with the Stauntons to see the pictures; there were pictures enough in the woods, such as she had never seen before.

Once Godfrey came over on business about the estate, and came to call. He had lost his boyish manner, and had caught his brother's gravity and reticence.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Palmer, afterwards, when he had somehow extracted the fact that Constancy was working hard at college, and thinking of nothing but her examinations, "I've always known that boy admired Cosy. He's too young for her, and Ingleby wouldn't suit her at all. But clever girls often take to handsome men with nothing in them."

"But Godfrey Waynflete has a good deal in him, Aunt Con."

"Well, he hasn't much to say. I expect Guy was too clever for old Mrs. Waynflete, and wouldn't give her her own way. But what Cosy will do when she comes home, I can't think. She'll never find enough to occupy her talents. I wish she would marry—some one who could give her a career."

Florella did not pass over to her aunt a

letter which she had just received from Constancy.

That Florella had powers of an unusual kind, except for painting, was an idea that had never formulated itself in the elder girl's mind. Nevertheless, she was always open with her, and was never quite happy under her disapproval. She wrote—

"People ought not to have to decide on their future lives till they are thirty at least. I feel so extremely young sometimes. It's much easier to learn moral philosophy than to find it make any difference in one's life. I shall go in for society, and see if that has a developing effect. New sorts of people teach one more than books. I got heaps of ideas from Mrs. Waynflete. All that business life was so new to one. I do like meeting new kinds of people. Every one here is so groovy. University life is very narrow. It is much more original and interesting, if you have brains, to spend them on doing than on learning. Mrs. Waynflete

was far cleverer than any literary woman. I am glad Guy is better, and that 'Mr. Godfra',' as old Cooper called him, is being such a good boy, and minding his business. If you can manage a *private* interview with Rawdie, you might give him my love. The only thing I regret in the events of last summer, is that that enchanting beast's former master promised to get me a similar puppy. And now that chance is lost to me for ever. Well, I have no more time. If I don't come a cropper, I believe Miss ——, will offer me a lectureship here. Only in *that* way shall I think of coming back again. But I think a London winter would pay best. The tour with the Stauntons is the next thing, at any rate, and I mean to enjoy that to my heart's content."

Florella mused over this letter. She thought it significant that Cosy should find time to speculate on life, when her final examination was imminent, and she understood the veiled allusion to the attentive professor, whose atten-

tions, though she did not know it, had been so carefully brought to Godfrey's notice by Cousin Susan. She had always thought that Cosy had liked Godfrey better than she had chosen to confess. But she had done her best to offend him, and with her sister he was stiff and shy. Besides, there was a general belief that he was engaged to Jeanie. He did not look very happy, and Guy had never dropped a hint of such an arrangement, and always managed to put Godfrey in a favourable light, in any chance mention of his name.

But Florella had heard Cuthbert Staunton call him a "young ruffian," and she could not think him good enough for her brilliant sister. He was certainly on Constancy's conscience; but whether he was also on her heart, was a different matter. On the whole, Florella hoped not.

CHAPTER VII.

LIFE AND DEATH.

CONSTANCY'S college career ended, as had always been anticipated, with credit, and even with a share of renown. She helped to prove the power of her sex to compete for laurels formerly reserved for the other, and she was made much of accordingly. She was very much pleased, and not greatly surprised, for the kind of power that she possessed is rarely unconscious. It was not through the sense of intellectual failure that the gospel was to come to her. She was not even tired with the hard work, only ready for a holiday, and Kitty and Violet Staunton were glad enough to share it with her.

So off they went, prepared for every sort

of exercise and adventure. After about a fortnight of successful sight-seeing the three ladies found themselves in a charming little settlement in a broad mountain valley, which we will here call Zwei-brücken, where cool green rivers rushed through green fields and flowed from the heart of dark, snow-tipped mountains. There were large fawn-coloured oxen and little fawn-coloured goats, houses surprisingly like toy Swiss cottages, and a new hotel in the same style, with the usual variety of tourists. It was a centre for mountain ascents and for excursions, and Constancy and Violet sat under a wide verandah, on the afternoon of their arrival, and watched the groups of travellers.

"Don't you remember," said Constancy, "talking about the feeling of London? What's the feeling of this? It's green, it's cool, it's windy, it's rushing and fresh."

"When Guy Waynflete came in in the middle, and we settled about Moorhead," said Violet, "I was provoked with him this year

for not going abroad when he promised, for Cuthbert simply buried himself in the British Museum, and said all the sources of culture were to be found there."

Constancy did not answer; she had fallen into a dream. She leant her chin on her hand, and looked over the wide valley, while into her open eyes there came the same look with which Florella "saw" the picture in her flowers. At such moments there was a promise for the future in Constancy's young face of which, with all her successes, the present had shown no performance.

Suddenly her intent look brightened.

"The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty," she exclaimed. "You can't get 'back of that.' Free, free, free! That's the feeling of it! The river, the wind, the sky—every one out on a holiday, and—the curate there in his flannels, how he enjoys them. It makes one a little mad—— Why, Vi! Good gracious!"

For Violet, in startling confirmation of the last words, had suddenly rushed forward and

launched herself on the neck of a young man in brown tweed, who was coming up the steps of the verandah.

"Cuth, Cuth! Oh, how lovely! Oh, did you know we were here?"

"I have known long enough to mitigate my alarm at your greeting. Your letters were at the post-office. Yes—here we are. How do you do, Miss Vyner?"

"I shall believe in brain-waves in future," said Constancy, as she gave him her hand. "I had just recalled a conversation with you and Mr. Waynflete, and I see you coming. Is he with you?"

"Yes, at last. His brother thought him overworked, and very sensibly wrote to me to come and carry him off. There he is."

Constancy had not seen Guy for more than nine months, her last remembrance of him was among the dancers at the Kirkton Hall garden-party, and she realised at once, as he came along the verandah, that the slight youth with his

pathetic eyes had grown into a very remarkable person.

"Why—he looks like a mystic, or a martyr!" she thought. "No wonder people turn and look at him. It's a startling face."

Guy's greeting was, however, simple enough. He was cordial, but he smiled his little reserved smile as he said—

"Yes, it was very good of Staunton to wait for me. I couldn't get away before. When I go back, I hope Godfrey will go to Scotland and get some shooting."

"And Rawdie? Is he thriving? And have you seen my aunt and Florella? Are they quite settled at Waynflete?"

Guy answered appropriately, and presently took his letters, and went away to study them.

He was still sitting in a quiet corner of the verandah, when Staunton, who had remained to exchange news and plans with his sisters, came in search of him.

"The girls are getting coffee," he said, and then they are going to stroll out and see the bridges. Will you come?"

"Better not. I walk so slowly. I'll come and meet you."

"Come now," said Cuthbert. "This trip isn't quite answering for you. What is it? You must tell me just what you like."

"Well—new places and so many changing people worry me. *He*—it looks uncommonly grim and grotesque in new combinations. It spoils the look of the world. It's a little queer, you know, and tiring. I'm much stronger, really; I can do what I've got to do. But I expect that's about all. It's months since the real trouble touched me; but I think there's something more to come—some day."

"Suppose we find some more out-of-the-way place, and stay there quietly. What you really want is rest."

"No. I like this place, and everything is really going on well with us. Godfrey shall get out of his hole yet. Oh no, I'm not beaten. We're not going to the dogs ourselves, nor is Waynflete. And as for other things — well — the world goes wrong with others."

He glanced at Cuthbert for a moment, then sat upright, and said—

"It won't do, of course, to shirk any of it. I'll come. I want to cultivate Miss Constancy, and improve my mind."

Cuthbert made no demur. He thought that the change, however painful, had not come a moment too soon. He had never favoured the notion of a definite task to be accomplished; a definite foe to be conquered. He could not square such a view with any habit of his mind. But Guy had certainly accomplished something. Was it given to man to do so much, and yet to have more? Cuthbert knew well how sweet the outlook was into "the level of every

day," how natural and healthful were the hopes, and even the fears, that had dawned on Guy's spirit. But could flowers grow on such a field of battle?

Constancy and her friends intended to spend at least a week at Zwei-brücken.

Guy said that it looked bad to ride when the ladies were walking, but he was able in this way to share in mountain expeditions, and Cuthbert hoped that he enjoyed them. Constancy had always liked him, and was ready to plunge into all the new discussions for which her recent studies had prepared her. She was well aware that he now and then said things which enabled her to think as well as talk, and he argued with her, and drew her out, feeling as if she were a clever and agreeable child. When he cut out a square of tiny flowerets and still tinier growths of leaf and blade, and packed it carefully in a sandwich box to send it home, he felt as if he was laying an offering before a shrine. When he studied

the names of the flowers with Constancy, he felt that he had a good comrade in a mountain ramble.

One day something happened to her. She went out alone by a little craggy path behind the hotel, which led along the top of a steep descent to the river. She pursued it thinking of nothing but of adding a new specimen or two to her store of flowers, and presently saw a dog-rose of a peculiarly bright pink, hanging over the edge, and bent to pick it; the stone on which she stepped gave way, and she slid downwards, and stopped herself by catching at the rose just on the edge of—nothing. An inch further, and she would have fallen into the roaring torrent a hundred feet below.

For one awful moment, she believed that she could not turn and save herself; the next, strong, cool, and active, she had cautiously felt for hand and foot hold, and began to climb up again, to find her hand, as she neared the top,

enclosed in a firm clasp, while Guy's voice said—

"Steady; you're all right. Hold on. I can't lift you, but I won't let you go."

As he spoke, she was safe on the path again, but shaking from head to foot. He drew her away from the edge of the precipice, and she sat down on a bit of rock, and hid her face in her hands. She was mentally, as well as physically, dizzy, and he did not speak to her till she dropped her hands on her lap, and said, with an odd ring in her voice—

"Well! I was nearly killed!"

"Your nerve saved you. You were nearly safe when I came up, but it was an awkward place. Remember, you can't be too careful on a mountain."

"Well!" she said again, "I thought I should be killed; I thought of everything. I thought of the bit in the college magazine about me—about my being found—and Florella——"

"Yes," said Guy, "one does think, in such moments, of the dearest."

Constancy was silent. A deep crimson blush burned over her face and neck down to her very finger-tips.

Suddenly she turned, and looked up in his face.

"If I had been killed, there'd have been an end of me to all intents and purposes. I don't care for anything that *could* go on. Oh, I don't mean anything about opinions; but there *couldn't* be anything afterwards that's real to *me*. There couldn't be anything that *I* want."

"You have found that out," said Guy.

"I never thought about God at all," she said abruptly. "He never came into my head!"

"Well, He has come now," said Guy.

She recognized his tone of conviction. Thoughts, speculations, flashed into her mind, at last, not as words, but as facts.

"Well," she cried again, "if I didn't believe

in Him, I'd have stood to it, and not been afraid. But I do—I always have—and yet I just forgot Him—then."

"But not now," said Guy. "I think I ought to take you back," he added; "you ought to rest, and recover yourself."

"I'll go back," she said, standing up. "But I'm quite well."

She walked on slowly beside him; but presently broke out again.

"You've been very ill, I know. Did you think then that to die, and leave off everything would be—horrid?"

"No," he answered. "For one thing, when I've been in danger, I've been too bad to know it. But I do know what it is to face—destruction. And certainly there is something beyond it."

She turned round to him as they came up to the hotel.

"I'm awfully obliged to you," she said, in girlish speech, but in a deeply moved voice.

"You'll not tell any one, will you? I want to think about it quietly."

Guy promised, and they came back on to the verandah together.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. VAN BRUNT.

THERE was a little commotion in front of the verandah, caused by some new arrivals, as Guy and Constancy approached it from the side. A stout lady in a bonnet and a handsome travelling-cloak, came up the steps, looked round her, and made a sudden rush towards them.

"My dear Guy! Oh, what a delightful surprise! I never was so glad to see any one. After all these months, it is indeed a relief to see some one of the family."

And Mrs. Joshua Palmer seized Guy's hands, and all but embraced him; a ceremony he had carefully avoided from his earliest childhood.

"Why, Cousin Susan! I didn't know you were still abroad. I'm very glad to see you," he said, astonished at this effusive greeting.

"And Miss Vyner? How do you do, my love? Well, Guy, and how are you? and is *dear* Godfrey here too? Jeanie, Jeanie, here's your cousin."

Jeanie, blooming, and very well turned out, came up also with outstretched hand.

"How d'ye do, Guy? I'm very glad we've met you."

"You look very warm, Cousin Susan," said Guy; "won't you sit down and have some coffee? I suppose your courier—you have one, I see—has engaged your rooms?"

"Oh, my dear Guy, that is part of the pleasure of seeing you. For I am quite certain that courier is a cheat, and if you, with your head for figures, would only look at our bills——" Here she tore open a travelling-bag, and thrust a bundle of papers into his hands. "I can speak to *you*——"

"Well, mother," said Jeanie, "you never would allow any one else to help you to manage, however well accustomed they were to travelling."

"No, Jeanie," said Mrs. Palmer, emphatically, "that I certainly would not."

Constancy, unable for once to come to the front, sat down at a little distance. She heard Jeanie, with a much readier, and more assured manner than of old, saying all the things to the Stauntons that might be expected from a young lady on her travels. She said that the mountains were perfectly sweet, and so were the cows and the peasants. Mother got into fusses sometimes, but it did not matter; she was quite happy when she could sit down. They had met *charming* people. Constancy felt a frightful conviction that, if she spoke, she should cry.

After the manner of her day, and of her kind, however, she got over her agitation for herself. She never could have supposed that

the sight and sound of Jeanie would be so aggravating. No more than she could have guessed beforehand, that the one face that would flash before her mental vision in that supreme moment, when life and death had hung in the balance, would be Godfrey's, angry and miserable, as it had looked at her from the doorway at Moorhead, or in the dim light of the Stauntons' drawing-room. That had come to her, and that was all.

Constancy endured this self-revelation in silence. She had not, at any rate, revealed this to Guy, in the moment of impulsive confidence that had ensued. What had induced her to say so much? She remembered that, in one of the discussions in which she delighted, she had cheerfully asked him what he thought Tennyson had meant by "the abysmal deeps of personality," and he had answered dryly—

"I haven't quite sounded them—yet."

It had passed for a jest; but as she recalled the short, unexpected sentences with which he

had answered her, she felt that he had meant it for a statement of fact, and of very remarkable fact too. It was characteristic of her that she speculated about Guy even at this moment of personal emotion.

She gave herself a little mental shake, and turned to get ready for the *table-d'hôte.*

She had never been really unhappy in her life before. She had never really been beset by a thought that prevented her from thinking of what she wished to think of, and claimed her for its own.

Guy disliked the fatigue of the long dinner, and rarely attended it. He was sitting in his favourite corner, when a movement made him aware that people were coming out again, and Mrs. Palmer, in much smarter clothes than of old, but with an unmistakable air of Ingleby and home, came and sat down by him.

"My dear Guy," she said, "you're one of the family, and I want to confide in you."

Guy was not given to consider himself as

one of the Palmers, but he accepted the compliment, and said—

"Is anything the matter, Cousin Susan?"

"Well, yes, Guy. I think there's a great deal the matter. Indeed, perhaps it's my duty to write to Mr. Matthew; but he isn't exactly considerate at a distance."

Guy allowed that this might be the case.

"And—my responsibilities are great with Jeanie, so much admired and an heiress. And I'm quite sure there's nothing to be gained by going out of one's own circle, especially among foreigners and Americans—people of no character at all."

Guy said that this charge was rather sweeping.

"Was there any American in particular?"

"Yes; there is a Mr. Van Brunt. He has been most attentive, and followed us about. I shouldn't be surprised if he came here. He speaks of himself as a man of fortune, and says his father has a great dry-goods store in

Chicago. It doesn't sound well—a *store* is a shop—very different from a mill. And, besides, if there's one thing I like it's constancy; and poor Godfrey at home in England—such cruel treatment for him, after that week at the Rabys."

"But, Cousin Susan, it's quite as easy to inquire about a man in Chicago as in London. Of course he ought to give a reference. And as for constancy"—Guy could not help a little smile as he spoke,"—of course Godfrey knows that Jeanie is perfectly free. Our affairs made that imperative."

"Oh, my dear Guy, I'd rather trust Palmer Brothers, in difficulties, than all the dry-goods stores in America out of them. Do reason with her, my dear Guy, and plead Godfrey's cause. Jeanie is a very good girl; but, of course, she feels her independence. Couldn't Godfrey come out, and look after his own interests?"

Guy was capable of hearing a good deal without committing himself. He would not promise

to reason with Jeanie, nor to telegraph to Godfrey; but he agreed to interview Mr. Van Brunt, and in his secret heart, he hoped that that dry-goods store in Chicago might prove to be solvent, and its owner's character and intentions clear as the day, and that his duty as "one of the family" would not be to protect Jeanie from the snares of an adventurer.

There were sounds of arrival late that night, and when he came down the next morning, Jeanie waylaid him on the stairs, looking, in spite of her smart tailor-made frock and well-dressed hair, very like the shy Jeanie of the Mill House, Ingleby.

"Oh, Guy," she said, "mother's been talking to you—and please—I've got something to say. It's your brother's own fault, if I've changed my mind. Besides, I hadn't seen anything of society *then*. I've quite a right, it was settled I had—to choose for myself."

"Certainly," said Guy, leading the way out

on to the verandah. I've promised your mother to talk to Mr. Van Brunt, if he comes."

"He has come," said Jeanie, meekly. "He came after we went to bed last night. Oh," —sitting down at one of the little tables laid for breakfast, and making a pattern on the tablecloth with the rolls—"people are silly —and—and there was ever so much nonsense at Kirkton. But there—Godfrey won't be disappointed. I'm sure, if he had wanted to come back, he never would have stopped away because you were ill. Any one may give away roses to anybody. But when you leave them behind on your dressing-table, and they come down in the vase, to be done up for the next person—well, you don't care very much anyhow. Oh—oh—you didn't stay long at Munich, Mr. Van Brunt—good morning. This is my cousin —Mr. Waynflete."

A slender, dark-haired young man, with bright eyes behind a pair of *pince-nez*, made Guy a formal bow, and Jeanie vanished, while her

"cousin," considerably embarrassed, bowed much less gracefully, and remarked that it was a fine morning.

"It is so," remarked the American; "but, Mr. Waynflete, I'm very glad to make your acquaintance, understanding that you take quite the place of a brother to Miss Palmer."

"Well—a—not exactly," began Guy, thinking that Jeanie must have come down very early to produce this understanding.

"She assures me that, if you are satisfied, her mother's scruples will be set at rest. Allow me to make it clear. Here is my card—Lawrence P. Van Brunt. I refer to my bankers, —— & ——, London, and to the American Minister in Great Britain, also the British Consul at Chicago. I—I dare say I may seem hurried, but I came over a month ago on business, and must cross again in a fortnight."

He laid a row of papers and letters of introduction beside the rolls on the table.

"I—I don't care what I do to post you up in

my circumstances—it's all perfectly square, I assure you. And Miss Palmer allows me to hope."

"I see no reason why you should not apply to Miss Palmer's uncle and trustee," said Guy, after a little more had passed.

"Yes; but I'm told you have great influence with her *mam*ma!" said the young American, wistfully.

"I didn't know it," said Guy; but he met the stranger's eyes, and they both laughed. "Won't you have some breakfast? Staunton, this is a friend of Mrs. Palmer's, Mr. Van Brunt. Have you ordered coffee?"

Mr. Van Brunt swept up his papers, and sat cheerfully down, proceeding to make himself very agreeable. The other little tables filled. Jeanie and her mother sat at one some way off. Constancy, with her friends, watched curiously, till the stranger, as soon as he politely could, edged off towards the object of his attraction.

"Eh what?" said Staunton, as the grave Guy for once went off into a hearty fit of laughter.

"Oh, I say!" he said; "it was quite outfacing. Fancy playing heavy father to Jeanie! I'd better wire to Godfrey at once."

The energetic American produced a Continental Bradshaw, and proposed to start that afternoon to interview Mr. Matthew. First, however, he went to walk with Jeanie."

And poor Cousin Susan, wiping her eyes, and with a heart full of feelings, of which the young ones took little enough heed, exclaimed, as she finally yielded the point—

"Oh, Guy, dear aunt would have thought me so weak. Chicago!"

The party soon dispersed. Jeanie and her mother followed the ardent lover home to Rilston; Constancy and her friends pursued their intended path among the heights of the Tyrol; while the good-hearted Cuthbert managed to find sources of culture wherever he fancied that Guy was most at ease.

Godfrey was evidently ashamed to express relief on paper, and simply wrote, "I shall begin again," but there was new purpose in every line of his letters, and most affectionate promises of keeping everything straight, if Guy would only stay away, get strong, and enjoy himself.

Guy said no more about himself; but he had little ways which showed his friend that he still had something to undergo. The steady look round in a fresh place, the shading hand over his eyes, the trick he had of finding a special corner, and of keeping to it, with his face turned one way, were significant; and he was more silent and quiet than ever; but also much more gentle. Cuthbert hardly knew how, one still bright evening, when some trifle recalled his own past, he found himself telling the story long buried even from himself.

Guy listened, looking at him with his searching eyes.

"Does it all seem over?" he said.

"Ah well," said Cuthbert, with a long sigh, "I can't say no. For average people like me, death *is* parting for the present, and as to the future—I'll leave it in the Hands that frame it. But for me, the moss has grown over her grave, I'm not unhappy, but I think the kind of business is over for me. No, Gladys was quite human, it all belonged to this good earth of ours, and it *was* very good—while it lasted—and worth while."

"Love does not belong to earth," said Guy; "it is never over."

"Ah, my boy," said Cuthbert, "not for you, perhaps; but I'm a blind old earthworm, and my soul doesn't soar. Yours is a blessed conviction."

"Yes," said Guy; "it is. But it isn't quite so sweet—as—as having it now."

He moved hurriedly away. He had gained a "blessed conviction." But it is very hard to feel as well as to know, that the soul is worth

the whole world, the whole "good earth," as Cuthbert truly called it.

He came home early in August, with much-improved physical health, to find Godfrey like another man, full of the prospects of the business, and as he shortly expressed it, "out of his hole." Rawdie was in raptures.

"He has got along," said Godfrey, "by worrying cats and hiding bones. But he will sleep on your bed, and sit on your slippers. Just look at the sentimental little beggar, cuddling into your waistcoat."

Guy sat down when his brother left him, in his old corner in the study, with Rawdie on his knee, and looked round him. The sense of constant effort slipped away from him.

"I can *do* here," he said to himself, in his northern idiom, "I'm used to it. One must pay the price."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ARCH-FEAR.

One sunny afternoon towards the end of August, Florella was sitting on the wall of old Peggy Outhwaite's garden, sketching a tuft of house-leek that adorned the roof of the ancient and ill-kept cottage. This little homestead, which was Peggy's own, and had belonged to her fathers before her, was tucked into a corner of the wood above the Flete, through which the foot-path led up to the Hall; the cottage was reached from that side by a little side-track.

The like of Florella had never come into Peggy's life before, and she took to this new kind of creature very kindly, finding her a

most attentive listener to Waynflete traditions.

Whether in old Peggy, inglorious, though not mute, there rested the soul of a romance writer, or whether, as she herself averred, the Outhwaites knew a deal, she told "Miss Flowra," as she called Florella, more about "t' owd Guy" than any one had ever heard before. She was a true reciter; and while Florella sketched, she would stand before her, and describe the passage of the Flete on that awful night when Waynflete was lost, as if she herself had been standing by. She told her the original legend of the traitor who had betrayed his friend's life, and therefore had "walked" ever since. She mentioned his appearances, and talked about him with a kind of grotesque familiarity as if "t' owd gen'leman" had been in the habit of taking constitutionals about the valley. But now and then her tone deepened.

"Eh, my dear," she said, "ye mun look

on't aright. A poor lost soul does na' coom back to tempt, but to warn—to warn us fra' sin, Missy. He's boun' to coom, though happen the devil drives 'un. But 'tisna a' can see. T' owd Guy may walk oop till most on us, and we be noon wiser. There's my Jem, puir lad, sees 'un, he do, and Mr. Guy, he knaws 'un well."

"Did he ever tell you so?" said Florella.

"Eh, d'ye think I need tellin'? Eh, there a be. Good day to ye, sir."

Florella's palette fell out of her hand before this friendly greeting revealed to her that it was not the old, but the young Guy, who stood at the garden gate.

He had not been at Waynflete since his return, and now came forward with outstretched hand, while Jem appeared behind him like his shadow.

"Godfrey has been away," he said, "and I couldn't get over before. I have come to the Vicarage for a week. There are a good many

arrangements to make, and I want to ask Mrs. John Palmer a favour. I should like—it's an odd fancy—but I should like old Miss Maxwell, the Stauntons' cousin, to come to the church opening. You saw her, I think. I know Mrs. Palmer is going kindly to do the entertaining."

"Oh yes," said Florella. "I had thought of her. But she'd like you to ask her yourself."

"So I know," he said; "I shall ride over. Staunton says he won't come in the character of an hereditary foe; but I shall get him somehow."

"We asked Violet," said Florella, "and she says that ancestors are such a novelty that she is delighted to have even a villain."

Guy and Florella had a laugh in common as he turned and spoke to Peggy, and she gathered up her sketching things.

"Eh," said the old woman, as they went out at the gate together, "t' owd Guy winna mak' an end yet o' Waynfletes!"

When old Miss Maxwell, picking York and Lancaster roses in her little garden, looked down the bleak grey street of Ouselwell, and beheld a stranger riding up, she felt, as she said afterwards, a presentiment of something unusual, which, as strange and striking young men were not common in Ouselwell, was perhaps not surprising. But it was fulfilled when the stranger left his horse at the inn, and walking up to her gate, bowed politely, and introduced himself as Guy Waynflete, a friend of her cousin, Mr. Cuthbert Staunton.

Miss Maxwell made him a formal bow and led him into her little drawing-room, and the little old maid and the tall young man sat down opposite to each other, and Guy said quite simply—

"Miss Maxwell, we have been restoring Waynflete Church. It is to be opened on Michaelmas Day, and my brother and I wish very much that you should be with us on the occasion. We have to thank you for

the family papers which you allowed us to have."

"You do me a great honour, Mr. Waynflete," said the old lady, formally. "It is long since I was so far from home; but I should, I assure you, be glad to share in the rejoicing. Although the relations between our families were not as happy as could be wished, yet somehow, sir, any connection so long ago creates an interest."

"Yes," said Guy; "that is just my feeling."

Then she gave Guy bread and salt in the shape of tea and hot cakes, and lapsed into more friendly chat, shaking hands tenderly with him when he took leave, and the interview, a somewhat quaint one for the end of the nineteenth century, concluded.

"A most distinguished young man," as she wrote to Kitty Staunton; "but I fear he has the look of a doom upon him."

"Which only means that he looks delicate," said Constancy, when this cheerful sentence found its way to Waynflete.

For Constancy was there, having finished her trip, and having assured herself that Godfrey was pretty well tied to Ingleby. The world was going well. The old incapable tenant of Upper Flete, the only farm on the estate of any value, died, and was succeeded by a nephew, with more education and capital, who came to terms with Godfrey as to needful improvements, and rented some more land. A purchaser was found for the copse-wood, which had not been cut for many years, who bought it standing, and undertook all the expenses of cutting and carriage. A great change would therefore soon be seen in the whole aspect of the valley, and, as for the house, Mrs. John Palmer's fancy for it continued, and she thought of taking it, as she could well afford to do, for a summer residence; in which case, she would, no doubt, prove a good friend to the village.

Godfrey came forward and made all the arrangements without any apparent reluctance; but a queer little smile, not unlike his brother's,

came over his face when he was questioned by the neighbouring squires on his views on preserving or politics, and he would not commit himself as to the future.

All this was satisfactory to Guy, and so, in another way, was his "reconciliation" with the last of the Maxwells of Ouseley. Matters seemed to be drawing towards a point of success, of which the coming gathering was a kind of symbol. As he was returning from a ride in the broad, spreading sunlight of an August afternoon, he thought of all that the past year had brought to him. It was but a year since he had shown Florella the picture in the octagon room, and her words had roused him to make a fight for his freedom. Till she touched his spirit, he had been tossed and driven in helpless and hopeless bondage to fear, his one notion of fortitude, concealment, his one refuge, a remedy worse than the disease. That danger he recognized with critical self-knowledge, had, in his case, been

born of fear, and was itself something of a spectre of his fancy. Apart from maddening terror, he would never "take to drink." And, after this year of stern and steady conflict, it did not seem to him that any bewilderment of the senses could ever again terrify him beyond the power of self-control. While, as for that inward sense of possession, that presence, which for him lay behind all else, if that should spring into consciousness again, after its long sleep, he was prepared to face it. There was another force, deeper and stronger still, which, in dim and awful glory, had made itself felt within him.

Guy believed that his soul was saved. There are no other words for it, though these may convey a hundred other meanings. But there was "more to come." Whether this conviction was well-founded, or whether, as Cuthbert would have told him, it sprang from the depression of exhausted nerves and spirits; from the melancholy too often associated with trials

such as his, it equally proved that he was not free as other men were for the sweetness of life and love.

As other men? Were other men free? "The drink" might have been a bugbear to him, but it was an awful fact to thousands of those others. How many devils had possessed his rough ancestors, whose clutch had not closed on him, because the one great gain of old Margaret's courage had been that he and his brother began life on a higher level? How did this poor Jem Outhwaite, who burlesqued and caricatured his own grim experiences, come to be what he was? As this thought occurred to him, Jem himself started out of a gateway beside him, and, after a grin and nod of greeting, picked up Rawdie, and carried him over a muddy piece of ground, through which he himself humbly shambled beside Guy's horse. The royal favourite should not needlessly wet his feet.

Jem was a conversational person, and fired off short remarks at intervals.

"Owd Cowperthwaite says Waynfletes'll tak' t' bread out o's mouth."

"Old Cowperthwaite's a scoundrel," said Guy.

"Ay, sir," said Jem, cheerfully. Then, after a pause, "I see twa rabbits over Flete Edge. Mr. Godfrey can shoot 'em."

"Ay, I dare say he will."

"I see t' owd gen'leman by t' brig on Friday," said Jem, in the same contented treble.

"Nay, Jem, I don't think you did," said Guy, didactically.

"I see Miss Flowra," said Jem, in the same tone of cheerful indifference.

Guy sprang from his horse, and Jem, setting Rawdie delicately down on a bit of turf, grinned, nodded, shambled away across a field towards the river, and was out of sight in a minute.

"Oh," said Florella, as she came up, "I hope Jem will go straight home, he has been about all day. Old Peggy is really ill. She got a chill the other day waiting for him at the

bridge in the rain. You know he stops at the Dragon, and the doctor says he must be found quick, or it may go hard with her."

"I know," said Guy, briefly. "I'll just go and put my horse up, and then go and fetch him. He'll come with me. He was here this minute."

"You know," said Florella, in a half-whisper, "that he says t' owd Guy stops him."

"I know," said Guy. "But don't listen to stories about him. *You* mustn't get to fancy the place is haunted."

"I am not afraid," she said, and there was a touch of reproach in her voice. Guy paused a moment, then spoke in another tone.

"I think I have been wrong," he said. "I wanted you to forget what you had done for me, for fear the least influence from which you have saved me should breathe on your spirit. But you ought to know that you have saved me. You *have* led me to that saving Presence of which you spoke. Whatever may come,

whatever it may cost, yet the snare is broken, and I *am* delivered."

She looked at him without a word.

He went on in the same steady, controlled tones. "Now you see there's another. Will you help that poor lad through the next hour, I think he'll be hard pressed? Good-bye, he shall come to his mother. He shan't be *too late.*" He took her hands, and bent as if to kiss them. A little sob broke from her, and in a moment the kiss was on her lips.

He was gone before the blood had time to burn up in her cheek, and she broke into a passion of tears, while formless and awful, all the terror that he might be going to meet, rushed over her spirit. She felt helpless, powerless, certain of evil. Her soul was full of mist and cloud. All she could do was, like a child, to follow his behest, and pray for Jem.

Guy, thrilled with a new and high excite-

ment, put up his horse, and with Rawdie still at his heels, pursued his way towards the Dragon, intending to call Jem away from its enticing attractions, and to escort him over the old footbridge back to his mother. A simple thing to do, but he had only crossed that bridge once before.

The hot bright sunlight had thickened into a thundery mist, and the light rapidly faded. Guy was not tired now, he walked easily enough, nor did any perplexing thoughts beset him. He saw—no more than usual. He felt no inward horror. But upon his rapturous mood there fell as strong a conviction that he was going to dare his fate as if he had gone to pick up a bomb of dynamite. He felt as if the very air was a resisting force as he pushed on through it. He went on, and a deep sadness came upon him, and all in a moment, as he came to the top of the hollow, he knew that it was the expectation of death. He stopped and looked down into the mist. He

could not see across the valley, and he could not see across that expectation. He could not think of any definite danger. He stood still with his eyes on the ground; upon the mist the spectral shape that went before him, showed out sharp and clear. Words came into his mind. "Fear not him that can kill the body." But "*the body*" meant life and work, and love and joy. It meant Florella. Perhaps his body was the price that had to be paid for his soul. And when the end was past? What did death mean? When the spirit was free from the flesh, would the spiritual foes be gone? Or would the last veil be withdrawn from their terrible faces? What would await him in the world where the other Guy had gone before?

Guy went on down the hill till into the misty air gleamed the paraffin lamps of the Dragon public, and into his misty thoughts came the need of sharp and prompt action.

He stepped inside the door, and called

out, "Is Jem Outhwaite here? I want him."

Two or three men were standing about in the bar. They looked at Guy, and fell back before him with surprising readiness.

"Here a be, sir," said one, pushing Jem's reluctant figure forward, as he tried to slink behind them.

"Come Jem," said Guy; "your mother's bad, and I'm going to take you back to her across the bridge. Come along with me."

He laid his hand on Jem's arm, and with a short "Good evening," pulled him out of the cheerful circle, into the foggy dusk. Jem, who followed him usually like a dog, now hung back, and dragged against his hold, trembling and reluctant; not drunk, he thought, but manifestly dazed with fear. He was tall and big, and perhaps it was the dead weight of his resistance that made Guy feel as if the very mist oppressed him, and forced him back. Against

himself, against his poor companion, against uncomprehended forces he struggled on.

"Sithee, there a be. We canna get by. He'll get me!" gasped Jem, as he struggled.

"Jem," said Guy, "I have got past him, though I was just as much afraid as you. And I am not going to let him stop you. He can't do it, Jem. Say your prayers your mother taught you, and come on. He can't stop you."

"Eh, but he can—but he can! He's a coomin'; he's a gripped me!" gasped Jem, flinging his arms round Guy, and dragging him back, then shrinking behind him.

"No, he hasn't, Jem," said Guy, in clear, firm tones. "I'm going first over the bridge; so if he gets either of us, he'll have me. You come after, like a man, and God have mercy on us both!"

Guy pushed forward. Surely the poor fellow would follow now! But again Jem held him back.

"Naw, sir," said the poor half-wit, in his cracking treble, "I'll gang ower first, and yo' coom arter," and with a quick, unsteady run, he shambled on to the bridge.

CHAPTER X.

TWO, OR THREE?

GODFREY had come to Waynflete Vicarage for a couple of nights, to make his final arrangements as to the timber. He was walking along the lane at the top of Flete Wood, in the dusk of this misty evening, when he heard an angry bark, and then a howl as of a dog in distress.

"That's surely Rawdie," he thought. "What can bring Guy down there?"

He hurried on to a point in the lane, where the fall of the ground made the river and the bridge visible, and looked down through the gathering dusk.

He saw figures on the bridge; whose, and how many he could not tell; but there was

evidently a struggle in the middle. Was it a fight—or was one dragging or guiding the other? Were there two—or *three?* He gazed for a moment, puzzled and uncertain, then the bridge and the figures swung and reeled before his eyes, there was a noise of crashing timber, then a tremendous splash, and bridge and figures disappeared into the water.

Godfrey gave a great shout and call, as he sprang over the wall, and dashed headlong down the slope, over rock and wood and thicket, till he came to the edge of the river.

The great pool under the bridge was all stirred and seething with broken timber. Godfrey could see nothing else at first; but in a moment he caught sight of something like a human form. He jumped into the water. It was hardly out of his depth; but the floating, cracking timber made the greatest caution needful, and it was a minute or two before he could grip the collar of the man seen, and drag him towards the shore. It was Jem Outhwaite, dripping, shaking, choking

with water, not absolutely senseless, but quite unable to help himself, as only by the exertion of all his great strength, the powerful Godfrey managed to tug him towards a shallow place, and pull him ashore.

"Who else—who else?" gasped Godfrey, breathlessly; but Jem was quite incapable of speech, and only cried feebly.

Godfrey pushed him on to a safe place, and stepped again into the pool. The water was very cold, and the planks and rails of the bridge were drifting and knocking about in the current, so that Godfrey had to be most careful in the uncertain light to feel his way among the timbers as he waded through the water. As it was, he tore his clothes and bruised his shoulders. He turned towards the relics of the bridge, and there, caught in the timbers, lay Guy, face upwards, swaying with the swaying piles.

Godfrey pushed his way near, and got his arms round him; but he was afraid of bringing

down the whole fabric by one incautious movement. He raised Guy's head against his shoulder, when a voice close above him said, clearly—

"I think I can help you. This first piece of plank is firm. Can we lift him on to it?"

He looked up. Constancy was standing on the planks of the broken bridge. Her steady eyes were looking down, her firm hand was stretched out.

Godfrey leant his shoulder against the still standing stake, and held Guy more firmly.

"No," he said, steadily. "I can't lift him from below, and you couldn't do it. Listen. Go back to the shore, cross over the pebbles where the water is shallow above, then run to the Dragon and get help."

She went without an instant's delay, calling in loud clear tones as she went, tones that echoed through the wood and penetrated to the garden gate of old Peggy's cottage, where

Florella stood straining her eyes into the darkness. The next thing for her, when Guy left her, had been to go back to the old woman, to tell her cheerfully that Mr. Guy was going to see Jem home, so that there was no need to worry herself about him.

"Eh then, hinny," groaned Peggy, "bide till they coom, and mak yersell a coop a tay, for it's weary wark waiting, though they'll noan be lang getting ower t' brig."

Florella—such is life—looked at her watch to see how much time there remained before dinner, and, finding that she had an hour to spare, proceeded to boil the kettle and make the tea, while Peggy praised her handiness, and took her tea with pleasure, as she sat in her old wooden chair by the fire. She looked quite cheerful and absorbed in the present; while on Florella's mind pressed a weight of fear. Her hands were cold, she could not swallow the tea. Yet what was there to be afraid of?

"Eh," said Peggy, with a chuckle, "t' owd

gen'leman'll meet his match wi' twa on em. Gae oot till t' gate, honey, and see if they're coomin' up t' path."

Florella went gladly. She stood at the gate, and strained her ears and eyes. Surely the water rushed noisily below, surely there were sounds of—something. Suddenly there was a loud, clear call, in a woman's voice.

"Cooey—cooey."

No one in Waynflete but Constancy could have uttered that call, and Florella answered it with another, then flew down the path towards the bridge, just as a man ran down the field from the opposite side. She saw this man plunge into the water, and fight his way towards the ruin of the bridge. Then in the dusk she saw him reach another figure staggering under a weight. Slowly and with difficulty they reached the shore, and laid their heavy burden down.

"Eh!" cried the new-comer; "Eh—Lord a' mercy on us. Eh! It's Mr. Guy, drooned dead!"

Then Florella knew of what she had been afraid.

She could never clearly recall what next happened. The news of the catastrophe suddenly spread, so that, as it seemed, a crowd came up. Constancy's clear voice, self-possessed and resolute, sounded through the confusion.

"He had better be carried to the Hall; it is much nearer than the Vicarage, and I will run on and make ready."

Rougher tones close by, as some one shook poor Jem by the shoulder.

"Coom, man, coom; coom till mither. Nay, tha bain't droonded yet."

Then Constancy again, as she went away.

"Flo, you had better run on first, and prepare the poor old woman."

They had lifted Guy up, and were carrying him away, and the fleet-footed Constancy was far ahead, before her words had penetrated Florella's brain. Then she climbed up the hill to the cottage, where she found neighbours

gathering, and close behind her came Jem, hauled along by a friend, dripping and scared, but alive, and able to swallow, as a friendly neighbour poured hot drink down his throat.

"T' owd gen'leman'd a thrawed me in t' watter, but Mr. Guy thrawed 'un in instead, and t' brig smashed," was his story.

"Eh, eh!" said Peggy; "he's got 'is death, and Mr. Guy, too. Eh! they can baith lig in t' new kirkyard, and me alongside on 'em."

There was nothing for Florella to do, and she fled from this grotesque presentment of the mystic horror that haunted her. As she came up to the Hall, the doctor tore past her in his gig, having happily been caught close at hand. Guy had been carried upstairs, and Mrs. John Palmer, flurried, but full of kindness, was saying—

"Oh yes, Cosy; yes, you were quite right, my dear. So much more appropriate that he should die under this roof."

Florella came in, and sat down in the lamp-lit drawing-room.

"Is he dead?" she said, in a slow, dull voice.

"They don't know," said Constancy. "We'd better see that they have plenty of hot blankets, and what's wanted."

She went off to the kitchen; but Florella sat, stupid and helpless, it seemed to her, for hours.

Then there were voices in the hall, and then the sound of the gig driving off at full speed. Still Florella never moved, till Mrs. Palmer came in.

"The vicar's gone in the gig to get dry things for Godfrey; he won't leave his brother."

"Then Guy isn't dead?" said Florella, composedly.

"No; just breathing. He was caught in the timber so that his head was above water. It's the shock to the heart that has done it. But he isn't gone—yet."

Then Florella came to herself with a shock that was like the stab of a knife. The room swayed and darkened, and she barely kept her senses; but in a moment the life forces seemed to come back again with pain and anguish, but clear and ready for action.

"I'll go and help Cosy," she said.

Mrs. Palmer had an effective maid, who was able to carry out the doctor's directions, and the other women prepared what was needed, till the news came downstairs that the long fainting-fit had yielded at last, and Guy was able to swallow, and had moved and opened his eyes, though without any sign of recognition.

"The doctor would stay for the night, and every one not wanted had better go to bed."

"Godfrey sits there, at the foot of the bed, like a big dog," said the vicar, as he came downstairs. "He's no earthly good, but he won't stir."

When Godfrey, pale with that long, mute

watch, and not daring to take hope from the mere fact that his brother still lived, at last went down to breakfast, there by the table sat Constancy, holding Rawdie on her knee, and feeding him with bits of chicken.

"Oh," she said, "this poor little darling must have been in the wood all night. See, his paw is hurt; he came crying to the door this morning."

"Let me take him to Guy," said Godfrey, eagerly. "He might notice him—he has never come to himself."

"Not till you have had some breakfast," said Cosy, with brisk decision. "The first principle of nursing is to take care of yourself."

Godfrey was not capable just then of going back to first principles; but to be taken care of by Constancy was something new, and his spirit revived as she poured out coffee for him, and cut bread, and insisted on his eating his breakfast. Presently the others came down, and the vicar,

who had been out, came back, and the story of the accident was pieced together.

Florella had to tell how Guy had gone to fetch Jem Outhwaite back to his mother.

"So good-natured of him," said Mrs. Palmer.

Godfrey had heard Rawdie howl before anything had happened, and Constancy, being out in the wood, had heard his shout for help when he came down to the river.

"Old Cowperthwaite's in a fright," said the vicar. "He confesses that he had been used to keep 't' owd brig' repaired for his customers; but that since his notice, he'd let it alone. But I don't see now why it smashed so completely."

"Nor I," said Godfrey. "I looked, and saw two or three figures—I couldn't count in the mist—struggling. Of course it was Guy dragging Jem over. But I thought I saw three."

"Jem is wandering, and off his head," said the vicar. "He says 't' owd Guy' tried to throw him in."

Godfrey looked very much startled; his colour changed, but he did not speak; and soon the question rose as to what next.

He must telegraph at once to Ingleby, and also he said, faltering, "If—if Guy—he would want Cuthbert Staunton."

Mrs. Palmer begged him to telegraph at once, and the doctor's view was that they had better wait a few hours, and see how things went, before doing anything more.

Florella heard, as in a dream. A numb dullness was on her spirit. Constancy came and told how Rawdie had been taken upstairs, and that Godfrey thought Guy had moved and touched him.

"Poor little dog!" said Florella.

Then Constancy, with unwonted confidence, told, in hushed accents, the story of her escape at Zwei-brücken, of her sense of the finality of death, and of Guy's words, "There is something beyond."

"He *knew* it," Constancy said, in her strong, emphatic tones.

But even this did not stir Florella's soul; she wanted something *now*.

Late in the evening, Cuthbert Staunton arrived, full of anxious concern, and it fell to Florella to give him supper, and to answer his questions as to what had happened. She went through it all, in a matter-of-fact voice; but she knew that Cuthbert knew what it all implied.

There was a little silence, and then she suddenly said—

"It has been all in vain!"

Then Cuthbert leant over the corner of the table, and laid his hand on hers; she seemed to him so young and lonely in her despair.

"My dear," he said, in his kind voice, "he would not think so. Very strange things have passed; but though I don't see them quite as he does, he has made as noble a struggle as

man ever made. And he *has* conquered. He has mastered his weakness, and risen above it. It is a thing never to be forgotten. Even if we lose him—as may be—as may be—I cannot think—I cannot think, Florella, that he will lose himself. And—I think you must not fail him now. The conditions of the fight are very mysterious, and I could not say that our courage may make no difference to him. His perceptions are keener than ours."

"I'll *not* fail him," said Florella, with a light in her eyes. "I'll fight it out too."

She went up to her room, and knelt down by the bed, and fought as hard a fight with her own soul as ever Guy had waged with his.

If her thoughts could affect his, if her will could share in the struggle, she must not will for him a lesser thing than he had willed for himself. She would not pray only that Guy might live and not die; but that, at all costs, his work might be carried through, his victory

completed. She must give him as he gave himself. She prayed the prayer of faith with all her waking will; but when at last, exhausted, she fell asleep, in her dreams she prayed that he might be given back to life.

CHAPTER XI.

WAYNFLETE OF WAYNFLETE.

And Guy did not die. At first he lay in a state of collapse, hardly kept alive from hour to hour, silent, motionless, and apparently unconscious of all around him; but gradually there was some slight improvement, now and then a response by word or look, more power of taking food, and a stronger pulse.

At last, about a week after the accident, on a calm sunny day, when Cuthbert was with him alone, he lay with open eyes, watching the window.

"Cuthbert!" he said suddenly.

"Yes," said Cuthbert, quietly. "What is it? Want something?"

"Help me up, please. I want to look out of the window."

They were the old imperative tones, and Cuthbert cautiously put his arm round him, and raised him a little. Guy looked out at the sunny garden, at the wooded hills, all round the room, and then up into Cuthbert's face.

"Yes!" he said, "I thought so. The spectre's *gone*."

"That's a good thing," said Cuthbert; "but now you must be very still and quiet. Lie back again. You're much better."

"How's Jem?" said Guy, after a minute.

"Well, he had a chill, you know; but he's safe at home with his mother."

"Oh," said Guy, with a long breath, "the room looks so nice and natural! I've been looking at it for hours!" Then, "Don't have that bridge mended. It must be in a new place."

"You recollect all about its being broken?" said Cuthbert.

"Oh yes; I recollect everything. But I had to rest. I've *really* rested."

"Go on resting," said Cuthbert, quietly.

But Guy was always a surprising person. He came back to life with a suddenness and a vigour that, as the doctor said, showed "almost abnormal rallying power." He was not allowed to move for fear of the least strain on his heart; but he was awake to everything, and soon made Godfrey lift him on to a sofa by the window, "to look at the world;" and his delight in so looking showed how the world had been recently spoiled for him. He was soon downstairs, in the garden, out for a drive; every step in recovery was achieved before any one thought he was ready for it, and each new enterprise seemed more enjoyable to him than the last.

The tension which had held the whole household on the stretch, relaxed. Preparations for the ceremony on Michaelmas Day were pushed forward with cheerful alacrity, and Guy

took his own presence at it as a matter of course.

The wreck of the broken bridge was cleared away, and orders were given for a new one to be built of rough stone, nearer to the Dragon; while a different turn was to be given to the footpath.

"It was," said Guy, "more convenient."

Old Cooper, unable to endure his anxiety any longer, arrived one day in the Rilston fly to satisfy himself as to Mr. Guy's condition. He found Guy able to welcome him warmly, to ask searching questions as to what had been done during his illness, and to promise a speedy return to Ingleby.

"That's well, Mr. Guy," said the old man. "We've made a fair year's work of it at the mill, and it would be a pity if ye were cut off just as the business is looking up again."

"I've got to thank you for giving me a start in the right direction," said Guy, with meaning.

"Eh, sir," said Cooper; "ye've done more than your aunt expected of you, and we'll all be glad to see you at work again. I'm glad to have seen the place that the old lady set her heart on; but it's but a lonesome situation. And you seem to have been far from fortunate in crossing yon beck."

"Unlucky!" said Guy, as Godfrey went to show the old manager out, and left him alone with Staunton. "I can but wonder at my great good fortune. I was so sure that I was going to my death, that my life was the price I had to pay, that I can't believe that I shall live; that I've come off scot-free for a ducking—so far."

"Why, my dear boy, it was touch and go," said Cuthbert.

"Ay. It was so queer to feel no contact myself with the terror, and to see poor Jem in the throes of the struggle. And he put me back, and went to face him first." Here Guy faltered, and almost broke down. "He won

the battle. But then, on the bridge—you'll say I was faint, and felt the dead weight of Jem—there was nothing; but, well—*people talk of the powers of the air.* I could not stir—an inch. Then Jem yelled out, and I got loose, and the bridge cracked—no wonder!—I woke up here by degrees. I knew when you came and held my hand, and when Rawdie licked my face; but I couldn't do a thing. I had to *stop.* And now to be alive—and alone!"

"Thank God, my boy, it's all over."

"Yes, I thank God," said Guy. Then he added, quietly, "It doesn't matter how much of it has been what you call natural, or what caused the horror that poor Jem burlesqued. I had *to fight.* It's true enough—all temptations are common to man. I might have been as he is. Now, Cuthbert, let the rest be silence. I shall never speak of these things again. Believe me, they *are* all over. But, a thousand times I thank you."

He looked up, and Cuthbert saw the conflict and the victory, both in his face.

The shadow, if shadow it could be called, was the fading out of life of poor Jem Outhwaite. Less ill at first than Guy, he had no vitality to resist the shock and chill he had received. He had one word more to say about the crossing of the bridge, when his poor feeble soul had put forth its one flower of courage, and he had tried to take the post of danger.

"Ay, sir," he said, in his cracked voice, to all the vicar's words of comfort and hope.

But, when Guy came at the very last to see him, he looked up in his face with a smile that was not foolish, and said—

"We thrawed t' owd gen'leman in to t' watter, *not he we.*"

His mother said that now her poor lad was safe, she could lie in her grave; but she never could have left him behind her. He was laid in the new churchyard, next to the grave of the old squire; and both, all barriers thrown down,

awaited the consecrating words that would join their resting-places to those of their kindred and neighbours who rested in peace. Guy and Godfrey stood together at the head of his grave.

Godfrey, through all the time of suspense, had fallen into the way of bringing all his hopes and fears to Constancy. She had hunted him out to take exercise, just as she trotted Rawdie, who had been a devoted nurse to his master, daily round the garden, and sacrificed the peace of the stable-cat's life, that he might have the refreshment of chasing her up a tree. Now, after the funeral, as Guy lingered to look at the progress made in the church restoration since he had last seen it, Godfrey went back and found her, as he hoped, taking Rawdie for a walk on the lawn.

It did not seem unusual when he began—

"I've got something to ask you. Don't you see how this place is like a part of Guy? Can't you tell me how to make him see that that mere mistake must be undone? It *is* his.

If he would but call it so. It is never out of his thoughts."

"I think," said Constancy, looking straight before her, "that it ought to be his. And I think you have done all you can to make up to him. And I think you are quite right to want to make up, and to care about it. And, I am ashamed of having said I did not think so. I was horrid and narrow and small. I always have been, ever since I played ghost for fun. I'm a 'finished and finite clod, untroubled by a spark.' That's all."

"Oh, Constancy," cried Godfrey, unheeding, if recognizing, this apt quotation. "You know that I've been a brute to Guy, and an ass about myself. Thank Heaven, Jeanie threw me over; she'll be married next month. I'm a mere duffer compared to you; but I love you with all my heart and soul, and if you would—— "

"Stop," she said, with a kind of dignity; "you mustn't *make* me."

She stood still, her face turned away. Once, when she had been asked what she would do with her life, she had answered, "Why, *live* it, of course." Would the life now offered her be really her own? The simple yielding of the ideal maiden, to whom the lover comes as a great god, with all the gifts of life in his hand, is not for such as she. She knew very well now, that it was "a big situation." "Yes" was not easy to speak; but "No" was impossible.

She turned towards him, pale, and with trembling lips.

"I never thought I would," she said; "but—but you've been so *much* better than I have—all through—if you can't be satisfied without me—we'd better try it—some day."

Rawdie was found, soon afterwards, sitting by himself in another part of the garden. He had retired with discretion.

"And now, Guy," said Godfrey, by-and-by, when his tale was told, and Guy, after more

sympathetic congratulations, had dryly remarked that it was fortunate that Mr. Van Brunt's character and credit had proved above suspicion, "I want you to listen.

"You know well enough which of us has carried on Aunt Waynflete's purpose. You know what she really meant, and that this wretched will was a mere mistake. But for you, the business would have gone to the dogs, and this place to the hammer, or, perhaps, to the devil; for, remember, I'm your own flesh and blood, and I know what this last year has been as well as you. And I can be just as determined. I took an oath, and I'll not break it. And, look here, that's as much an inward prompting of my soul as ever you knew in yours. It's my share of the work. Now, for once, you must give in."

"Yes, I will, Godfrey," said Guy, "I'll give in. And, my boy, I wouldn't give the stoniest field in Waynflete for the finest estate in England; and I took it hard I hadn't got it.

I loved it from the first moment I saw it, and now——"

For once Guy faltered, and could not finish, but by a great squeeze of Godfrey's hand, though the next minute he said—

"Mind, we'll have to consider how to do it in a proper and legal manner. We'll keep it quiet till that's done."

"All right," said Godfrey. "Aunt Waynflete would be satisfied now."

It was Michaelmas Eve, a lovely still day, without a leaf stirring. Florella was gathering Michaelmas daisies. Nobody thought much about her in these exciting days, and she did the odds and ends, and filled up the holes and corners. Suddenly a shadow fell on her flowers, and Guy's voice said—

"I want you to come with me to look at the picture."

"I'll come," she said, and they went slowly upstairs, and along the passage to the little octagon-room, flooded with autumn sun-

light, and stood together in front of the picture.

"How could I think it was like you?" she said.

Guy smiled.

"You know," he said. "I think you know all. I owe you my very soul, and for that which you have done, no words are holy enough."

"It was not I!" she murmured.

"It was *with* you, and *through* you. God knows I could not have done without one help that came to me, Cuthbert Staunton—the hard work at the mill—even poor old Rawdie—I have been helped so much! And now, Florella, my body as well as my soul is free. I think that I shall never be a slave again. If my health holds out, if I can do man's work in the world yet—when I have tested myself—will you let me come to you by-and-by? And, oh, Florella, my angel, my darling, will you be afraid to share my life then? Is it only pity

you have for me? or is it—— Can you love me, as well as help me?"

"A great deal *more*," said Florella, with half a sob. She stood for a moment, facing him with shining eyes. "I want you to take all myself—all there is of me," she said, with a ring in her voice. "If—if *that* should come again to you, it shall get through *my* soul first."

She hid her face on his breast; he held her in his arms, and, in the transfiguring sunlight, the sad eyes of the picture above their heads seemed at last to smile.

* * * * *

When there is a Prologue to a story, it should have an Epilogue as well. Should this take the sound of wedding-bells, when Flete Dale smiled in the sunlight, when the murky woods were cut away, and the dreary noise of the restless horseman was heard no more, when friends filled the old house with rejoicing, and the good days of Waynflete were come?

That would bring the story to a happy pause. But surely the true end of Guy Waynflete's story, of the battle which every soul that is born into the world must fight, but which he waged under such strange conditions, is not here, but in that unseen world, where the souls of the old Waynfletes had gone before him, where the real issues of the battle are decided, where the real story began.

There only, where the souls of the wicked, as well as of the righteous, are in the hand of God, can be gathered the fruits of Guy's victory.

The Epilogue of the story of Waynflete, as of all other stories, is elsewhere — is out of sight.

THE END.

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